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*With the author's regard.*

THE HOME OF THE EDDAS.

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GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,  
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THE  
HOME OF THE EDDAS.

BY

CHARLES G. WARNFORD LOCK,  
MEMBER OF THE BRITISH SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY, FELLOW OF THE  
ICELANDIC LITERARY SOCIETY, ETC. .

*WITH A CHAPTER ON THE SPRENGISANDR BY*  
DR. C. LE NEVE FOSTER, B.A., F.G.S., &c.

"To reside in thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice."

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

London :  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,  
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1879.

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## Dedication.

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WITH

DEVOTED AFFECTION,

AND

THE BEST WISHES THAT HUMAN HEART CAN UTTER,

I DEDICATE

THESE FIRST-FRUITS OF MY PEN

TO

MY MOTHER.

Best to bairn is mother ever.

*Icelandic Proverb.*



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# THE HOME OF THE EDDAS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

My way is to begin with the beginning.—DON JUAN.

THE "Home of the Eddas,"—but who or what are the Eddas? Are they an obscure race of autochthones like the Todas, or are they some curious specimens of the lower animal or vegetable creations? They are neither. The primary signification of the word *edda* is a great-grandmother, but that will not help us much, as we cannot fix upon any country as being the home especially of great-grandmothers; moreover, the noun is no longer used in that sense. It survives only as the proper name of two literary works, the finest and greatest classics of the Gothic, or, if you will, Teutonic races of men. The elder Edda, *the Edda, par excellence*, is occupied chiefly with Skald-ship-figures and forms the *Ars Poëtica* of the old Norse tongue. The younger Edda contains the heathen mythology of Scandinavia, which has spread throughout the members of the Teutonic family, and equals in beauty and interest, and in some respects excels, that of Ancient Greece and Rome. A study of the details of this mythology lies altogether beyond the province of this volume, and even a cursory notice of its most striking features would be out of place here; but now that our teachers and instructors have at last recognized the existence of such a thing as a Scandinavian infusion in our mother-tongue, and seeing how closely the early history of these islands is entwined in that of the

kings and peoples of the Scandinavian peninsula, has not the time arrived when the gods of our northern ancestors should hold as high a place in modern education as the unchaste deities from the Mediterranean, and might not some of the hours so fruitlessly spent in misinterpreting incomprehensible Horace be more fitly devoted to the classics of Northern Europe?

But we are wandering from the point. Having settled what the Eddas are, we have now to determine their homes. There is every probability that the Eddas originated in the minds of the inhabitants of Continental Scandinavia, and that they were current in the mouth of the people in very early times; but those were stormy, troublous days, and writing was as yet unborn, being but an unweaned babe when the avarice of fair-haired Harold of Norway sent that early edition of the Pilgrim Fathers across the main to Iceland. In this lonely island, difficult to reach, and not worth the cost of conquest, the Colonists possessed for a time just the quietness that was needed to cherish the growth of the arts of peace, while enough of fight and adventure remained to fire the poetical spirit of the people. Under these conditions the Eddas, which had only floated hazily in the memories of the continentals, were arranged and committed to paper by the more independent islanders. The Home of the Eddas, the spot where, and where only, they took definite shape and form, and waxed perfect as we now see them, is—Iceland.

After all, then, this is only another book on Iceland. You thought it was going to be something *new*! If you will be patient, I will try to convince you that in spite of the mass of interesting literature which English tourists—to speak of no others—visiting Iceland have bequeathed to us, it is still possible to write about that island and at the same time say something new. In the first place, it has been the rule with these tourists to confine their tours to the summer months, and to this rule there are only two exceptions: the missionary Henderson in 1814-5, and (then) Hon. A. Dillon in 1834. Much of what these travellers—especially the former—saw

and described is altogether changed now, and their works are valuable chiefly for instituting comparisons between the past and the present. Since then no one has recounted his experiences of a winter sojourn in the island. Having resided there for twelve full months, making many excursions and twice crossing the island during the thaws of early spring, I can at least say that I had the usual opportunities for making observations—in fact my only regret is that I lack the facile pen for picturing with adequate truth all that I saw and learnt during my novel season of housekeeping on the very verge of the Arctic Circle.

In other respects my training was of the kind generally denied to passing tourists. Circumstances compelled me for the most part to shun the principal cheapsteads, such as *Reykjavik* and *Akureyri*, where the life and the people are half Danish, half Icelandic, and threw me among the pure-blooded bonder and peasant classes. By them I was received as one of themselves, and necessarily saw much of the *vie intime*. This forced upon me the necessity for learning the language, as Danish was almost as wholly unknown to the people with whom I was most in contact as to myself, and Latin is not only very unsuited to express the vulgar needs of us moderns, but all save a very few priests are utterly incapable of carrying on a conversation in it. Probably my wits were sharpened by an unexpected event, which made my daily bread depend upon a pretty thorough acquaintance with the colloquial speech. Availing myself of the knowledge thus gained, and drawing upon that rich mine, the *Cleasby Dictionary*, when information failed me, I have adopted a rule of appending the English signification to every local name occurring in the journal, supplementing it in many instances by short remarks, especially etymological, which I have gathered into an Appendix. This plan I have followed, not without due consideration, and I preferred it to footnotes for several reasons. The latter are always printed in smaller type, which leads many readers to pass them over altogether as too tiring to the eyes; they greatly interfere with the

symmetry of a book and with the thread of the narrative, whereas notes arranged numerically in the form of an Appendix may be set in readable type, and may be conveniently read when the story has concluded. As this Appendix is not addressed to philologists, but rather to readers who wish to see a little deeper into their own language than they are able to do under ordinary conditions of schooling, I have thought it unnecessary to quote synonyms showing the relationship of High or Low German or the modern dialects of Scandinavia.

Another feature of novelty in the present volume is the chapter on the *Sprengisandr*. For this I have to thank a singularly happy accident and the kindly liberality of a generous and talented friend. Disappointed by the non-arrival of a steamer that was expected to call for him at a northern port of Iceland, Dr. Clement Le Neve Foster, H.M. Inspector of Mines in Cornwall, was compelled to gallop across the island in order to catch a later boat. Everything pointed to the *Sprengisandr* way as the best suited to his purpose, and thus it happened that the route, promising the greatest attraction to a geologist, was trodden by one whose sound and scientific training is acknowledged on all hands.

Regretting the unmerited limbo to which the island, full of thrilling interest to Englishmen, has been consigned by the guide-book makers, I have endeavoured to remove a part of the slur thus cast upon the land that offered me a happy home, and have concluded these pages with a chaos of information which, aided by a four-sheet map, may serve the turn of the tourist till Murray or Bædeker awake from their lethargy and give to Ultima Thule its due.

Finally, actuated by a belief that the public manifests a desire, and a very natural desire, to go to the bottom of everything, I have begun my journal at the beginning. The third, fourth, and eighth chapters refer in some measure to what has been already written about, but an explanation of the native names may help to beguile the monotony of repetition. If I may be permitted the liberty of modifying a

homely simile, I will end these remarks by reminding the reader that to be born "with a pen in the hand" is the lot of the fortunate few among whom I cannot count myself; therefore, I have not essayed any attempt at fine writing, but have endeavoured in a humble way to help fill the hiatus now existing in literature concerning Iceland.

## CHAPTER II.

## OUR EXPEDITION.

To the little isle of Iceland,  
 Place of perpetual snow,  
 A few of England's learned sons  
 Determined to go.

*One Month in Iceland* (ANONYMOUS).

THE expedition to explore the brimstone diggings situated in Parliament County, Iceland, set sail from Granton on the 6th July, 1875, in a Scotch steamer, the "Fifeshire," chartered by an Edinburgh merchant, to bring home ponies.

It will be unnecessary to name my companions, nor need I refer at length to the two inebriated Caledonian passengers—one a friend of the pony-dealer, the other under a delusion that he was bound for the Canary islands—whose unrefined company we could not escape.

For three and a half days there was nought to beguile the monotony of the voyage, save the reckless burning of cartridges by K. in his efforts to bag sea-birds. On the morning of the 10th, however, land was sighted, and at 7 a.m. we could distinguish *Öræfajökull* (1)<sup>1</sup> (Wilderness glacier), the king of Icelandic mountains, thrusting his glistening, snow and ice-covered peaks over 6000 feet into the sky, and presenting a grand and characteristic sight. Almost at the same moment we were reminded of the anomalous nature of Snowland's hills, of that wonderful assemblage of volcano and glacier cheek by jowl, by floating patches of pumice, which had been borne by tempest and torrent from the scene of the recent (May) eruptions in the north-eastern part of the island.

All day we ran up the coast, at too great a distance, how-

<sup>1</sup> See APPENDIX A., p. 290.



ever, to enjoy anything of the scenery and, at eventide, passed *Langanes*, distant about eight miles. The "Long-ness" is a low, pointed headland, with an abrupt face about 200 feet high, and is the resort of immense numbers of sea-fowl; the neighbouring country bears a flat and desolate appearance,—a hut or two scattered about, and a few curious natives on the cliffs were the only signs that the place was habited.

Infected with the dissipation of a sun that does not go to bed at all for about a fortnight, some of us employed the night in preparing home letters for despatch with the pony cargo.

At 6.30. a.m. on Sunday we were in the *Skjálfsandi* (Shivering) bay, and some hours later found us in one of the three wooden houses which compose the trading station of *Húsavík* (Housewick), the base of our future operations. Local farms being unable to supply us with the necessary number of mounts, two of our party continued the voyage to *Akureyri*, where we knew the horse-dealer's agent was collecting.

Having brought with us a supply of provisions, camp-beds, &c., and having engaged the services of the ship's steward and the cabin boy, the shelter afforded by the empty house was all that was needed to make us quite comfortable.

Little delay was made in despatching C. to carry out his surveys for roads and tramways, then each of us remaining proceeded to kill time as best we might till horses should arrive.

Some prospected the neighbouring *Laxá* (2) (Lax—[salmon]-water), others the *Botnsvatn* (3) (Bottoms water), while K. and I went on a shooting excursion. The sport met with has already been described elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> but I have thought it well to add some notes on our "bags" at the end of this chapter. In our rambles we came upon a pony-cart, a plough, and two wheelbarrows, none of them in a flourishing state certainly, but the possession of even the remains of such signs of civilization must be the envy of less favoured "towns." Anon we scrambled up the *Húsavíkurfjall* (House-wick-mountain) from

<sup>2</sup> Vide *The Field*, June 16 and 23, 1877.

whose summit, about 1300 feet above the sea, a good view was obtained of the surrounding country.

The pony question nearly distracted us: if twelve were promised six came, and these six quickly strayed home again, thanks to the man we hired at high wages to look after them, and who showed his sense of duty by forthwith getting blind-drunk and lying in some ditch till the pure air had removed the effects of vile liquor. Presently, however, the foraging party returned from *Akureyri* with a relay of seventeen mounts, aged variously from two to twenty years, which, pitched unceremoniously overboard in the bay, landed at diverse spots after their long swim to shore, and rendered hungry by their bath, called forth the best of our stock-driving qualities.

They were at last mustered and we loaded up at once for the seven hours' ride to *Reykjahlfið* (4) (Reeky-slope), so that at 4.20. p.m. four of our party, accompanied by the steward and three Icelanders, trotted merrily off, driving the packhorses before us.

We had not gone ten yards when the frying-pan managed to shake itself loose, and falling just in front of the untamed colt I was riding—one of our very few two-year-olds—he performed a series of evolutions which very nearly caused a sudden dissolution of our partnership. Each moment things grew worse. Delays were incessant and each one produced another, for the ponies became more refractory according as they got more hungry, and the guides grew lazier as more drunk. Every patch of grass was the signal for a free fight; the guides clamoured loudly for a halt, while the ponies strayed hither and thither and rolled on their loads, or extemporized kicking duels for our benefit. When urged forward again, they would all rush together into a path intended for one and there would be a fresh contest, during which they charged each other with a ferocity that threatened destruction to everything and everybody. One small animal laden with rice was completely overturned on his side, smashing the box, so that its contents trickled slowly out in a stream that

obeyed the jerkings of the animal's gait. Our only saucepan was broken to atoms on a lava block, while tent beds, fishing-rods, and such like, strewed our path as might the *impedimenta* that of a routed army.

Hungry, thirsty, chilled to the bone by the cold night air and with eyes, ears, nose, and mouth filled with a vile dust that penetrated through our clothes even, we reached *Reykjahlfið* at 5.30. a.m., and incurred the awful wrath of Big Peter by allowing our hungry ponies to stray into the uncut grass which was soon to become hay. A huge nip of neat whisky quickly solaced our host, and after being regaled with coffee and cakes, brought to us by his pretty daughter Jakobína, we put up what remained of our tent beds in the guest-chamber and slept off the night's fatigue. About mid-day we arose, and while the steward was preparing a substantial meal, we arranged the return of the ponies and engaged new guides.

A stroll round the familiar scene revealed the removal of the old church in the lava beds and the commencement of a successor, constructed of dressed-lava blocks and imported cement in lieu of the ancient "wattle and dab." A good part of a day was spent in fishing on the lake and in wandering over the islets which stud it, in quest of birds' eggs, which we found in great abundance.

In the meantime K. was not lazy. He devoted some time and trouble to fishing in the *Laxá*, which stream, however, he found "was a difficult one for me to fish, as you had to throw over weeds which extended five yards into the stream, and, being a novice, my hooks were constantly getting entangled," not unfrequently in the coat or flesh of the friend who rashly offered to bend on a new fly in place of the one he had just whipped off. Then he went char-fishing in lake "Botusvatu Fajall," and afterwards ascended the "Husiker Fajole." Having fortified himself with luncheon, he went out on a moor and saw "sixty young terns, and they crouched close to the ground: the old ones picked at my hat and I struck at them with my gun." He escaped his persecutors,

however, and then went to see the native fishermen taking salmon from the *Laxd*, which feat necessitated their walking Blondin-wise on rails, having "the torrent on one side and water on the other." Who now shall dare to say that Icelandic travel lacks looming danger and exciting incident?

On the afternoon of the 16th we were joined by other of our companions, who had come up by another and longer route than the one we had taken, and had been two days on the road. In the evening we cantered to the neighbouring sulphur diggings (*Reykjahlíðar-námar*) (5), to make general observations and to introduce "Verdant Green" to his studies, and after a very late dinner, the greater part of the night was consumed in discussing future movements. K., however, forewent dinner and discourse, his passion for sport taking him in search of birds' eggs.

Next day we were forcibly reminded that we were near the Midge-water (*Mý-vatn*), for we were attacked by such clouds of those insects, that the fourth Egyptian Plague would have been welcome in comparison. Ears, eyes, and nose were filled, and no one dared open his mouth in conversation, for fear lest that organ also should become a receptacle for the minute pests. Poor B., whom experiences of African "varmint" should have rendered impervious, sent us into convulsions of laughter at his discomfiture. He thrust his head frantically into an immense gauze hood; but the limit of his patience was reached when he found that he had imprisoned a host of enemies in his hair, and cursing the hour that he set foot in Iceland, he rushed madly from the scene to find security on a hill-top, in his agony of mind forgetting to release his prisoners.

We divided our forces for the day's work. K. proudly led a party to the *Krafla* (6)-námar, and cleverly proved his ability to discover concealed mineral wealth by falling headlong from his pony into what looked like an innocent sand hole, but which, unfortunately for him, proved to be a hidden bed of scalding hot brimstone. Small wonder that after so narrow an escape from a sulphury grave—on a Sunday too—he wrote

his impression that "It certainly is a country that makes one think seriously of the Almighty power of Heaven, and the passing away of heaven and earth, as at nearly every step you take, you cannot but feel the POSSIBILITY of your being destroyed, either by an earthquake, or by fire in the shape of lava. In fact, it may ALMOST be said that you are treading on brimstone and fire."

While K. was making his researches in dead *fumaroli*, others of our party rode away into the *Mývatns-öræfi* (Midge-water Desert), with the object of seeing the newly ejected lava and the craters whence it issued. We had journeyed far and seen nothing but a scatter of pumice, when we met an Icclander driving a number of ponies. In accordance with the native custom,<sup>3</sup> our guide and the stranger saluted each other, and the latter also raised his hat to us, and came up and shook hands all round, telling us in excellent English that he was Páll (Pálsson) from *Reykjavík* who had just accompanied our countryman, the adventurous Watts, across the *Vatnajökull*.

We learnt that the nearest volcanic vent was still two hours' ride further into the desert, and that the eruption of molten matter had ceased, to be followed by clouds of smoke, though we read in Baring Gould's volume that "immediately after an eruption has taken place, the volcanoes of Iceland relapse into quiescence, and no smoke or steam arises from them, as it does from Vesuvius and Etna." The majority voted against continuing the ride forward, and we accordingly turned our ponies' heads and jogged along beside our new and entertaining acquaintance, listening intently to his narrative, until a heavy downpour of rain reminded us of our whereabouts, and provoked a most undignified race for home.

The rain had ceased by the time we had dined, and, in the evening, a bath in the lake's shallow waters was very enjoy-

<sup>3</sup> That in *Reykjavík* and *Akureyri* degenerates into an intolerable bore. One has virtually to walk hat in hand, for though the same individual be met fifty times, the form must be gone through on the fiftieth occasion as on the first, whether there be any acquaintance to warrant it or no.

able. During this seasonable diversion the terns made such determined attacks upon the bared cranium of the youthful H. that he retreated precipitately, and in great disorder, to the tents, armed himself with a breechloader and cartridges, and returned bravely to the contest. A sharp fusillade followed, and presently he retired victorious, bringing with him an armful of slain birds; but this silly slaughter nearly brought its reward—a thrashing from Big Peter, who was in no mood to be thus robbed of his feathered live-stock, by the enraged young Scot.

Next day we busked ourselves for a visit to the *Fremri* (7)-*ndmar* (Further diggings), and some even dreamed of going to *Herðubreið* (*herði breiðr*), the “broad-shouldered” hill which had foiled Burton on a former occasion. Starting at noon, K. detained the caravan for  $1\frac{3}{4}$  hours on the first mile’s travel, while he stalked a falcon in the lava beds. His own words only will adequately describe the adventure,—“Saw a handsome Greenland falcon amongst the lava; and waited for my gun, and tried to stalk him. He had moved from where we first saw him; however, I spotted him again, and when within about sixty yards, I peeped over the rock to see where he was. On looking again, in order to shoot him, I saw him flying away,” and flying shots being the abomination of our friend, the bird escaped unhurt.

An atrociously bad and heavy road was made worse for us by the ignorance of our so-called guide, who took us over the longest and worst track. The first part of the journey lay through lava beds, whose source is variously conjectured by different authors, and the latter part over succeeding ridges of waterworn pebbles and sand, the accumulated débris of spring torrents, whose force here during the thaws must be terrific. A camping-ground in the Holy Valley was reached at 7 p.m.,—a small patch of sparsely grass-grown, unwatered land, lying under the eastern flank of *Bláfjall* (Blue mountain), and two hours’ ride from the diggings. Here we pitched our tents, made roaring fires of willow roots, and collected a little snow-water by digging holes in a tiny stream that,

issuing from a snow-patch, quickly lost itself in the thirsty, sandy soil.

At an hour when respectable people would be thinking of going to bed, a party of us went up to the steaming sulphur beds lying on the lip of an immense extinct crater called the Kettle. Laden with specimens, we returned to camp at 4 a.m. The return ride from our camp to *Reykjahlíð* only occupied  $2\frac{3}{4}$  hours, in a scorching sun, but much of it was downhill. We found Pétr and his family busied with the all-important hay harvest. An up-country farmer's very life may be said to depend on his hay crop, and, as it is about the only thing which claims his attention, he can well afford the extraordinary amount of time and labour which he devotes to it.

The sportsmen—the sporting element figured strongly in our expedition—now left us to go fishing down the *Laxá*, which runs from Midge-water to *Húsavík*. The remainder of our party made a timely start to *Þeista-reykir*<sup>4</sup> under the guidance of old Pétr, who atoned for his bad treatment of us in 1872 by presenting me with a fat sheep just before the march commenced. On the way he showed us a picturesque rift in the basaltic plateau, a sort of miniature *Almannagjá*, but with more pleasing features, especially a grassy banked lakelet nestling at the bottom of perpendicular and jagged cliffs 400 feet high and backed by towering peaks.

Here K. burnt more powder in honour of a pair of falcons, one of which he believed he struck because “the mate soared into the air, until he looked the size of a lark, and at last got out of sight in the sun, as if it was his desire to go into another world.” After descending to the level of the lake, K. announced his intention of taking our only guide, and riding ahead of the party in order to get time to work up his journal. To this we demurred, but effected a happy compromise by inducing old Peter to accompany him so far as to put him in the right path. Away the pair went. We sat down and discussed luncheon near the loch, enjoying the balmy air and picturesque scene, and listening to the plaintive

<sup>4</sup> *Þeisti* (less correctly *teisti*) = a guillemot.

wail of the plover. Scarcely had we covered another four miles when we came upon old Peter's noble white steed placidly browsing with saddle and bridle on, while at his heels lay his lordly owner sleeping off the effects of the bottle. But, as we neared *Þeistareykir*, we espied K. high upon a hill-side, leading his pony and utterly ignorant of his whereabouts. We could not resist a derisive cheer at the great man's error, and, hearing our voices, he scrambled down to our party with crest-fallen looks that provoked much "chaff."

Our camp was pitched on an unusually level greensward close by the sulphur pits. The farm-house had long been vacated, and now presented but a heap of turf and stones, with here and there the remains of what had been rafters, and which we quickly appropriated for firewood; but the *tún* (8), or home meadow, was superior to any I have seen in the island, being quite free from those ugly tussocks and mounds (*þúfur*) (9) which disfigure all other Icelandic meadows, an immunity to be doubtless attributed to subterranean heat preventing the frost from descending, as elsewhere.

The diggings were duly inspected, and at 9 p.m. we sat down to a good feast of mutton and other delicacies, in which K. would not join, but preferred, despite his late lesson, to push on to *Húsavík* at once. For ourselves, at about 3 a.m., the north-east wind, which had been blowing strongly for some hours, brought its usual accompaniment, bad weather. It rained and snowed till water trickled through our canvas in streams, and reminded us that a "condemned" military tent, though good enough, perhaps, in sunshine, was not the article best suited to give shelter in an upland snowstorm. We were spared the fate of our servants, whose ill-pitched covering was overturned by the wind, still we found things sufficiently unpleasant. Turning out at nine, we washed down a substantial breakfast with our last half-dozen of champagne, and then set about the unenticing task of packing up our soaking tents and baggage. In the teeth of a howling wind, accompanied by torrents of rain and snow we set off for *Húsavík*, the Cap-



tain suggesting that H. and I, being light-weights, should ride ahead and have fires lit in the stoves to dry our goods on arrival.

Instructed by our guide to keep always on the most worn and broadest path, we cantered off, hoping that our water-proofs and sea-boots would prove an effectual protection from the storm's fury. For the first three miles or so all went well, as we could find some sort of track, but presently we came upon a small *sandr*, a plain of sand and rolled stones, where nothing could be seen but a few foot-prints that returned upon themselves. All search for a path proved futile, and we accordingly followed the direction that commended itself as being most likely the right one, and after leaving the sand and crossing another small patch of very old lava we came upon a trail. Rejoiced at such good luck, we now galloped briskly onwards, for the storm had torn open our waterproofs, so that we were become wet to the skin, and the moisture trickled in streams into our boots. Entering a secluded valley, we were somewhat sheltered from the cutting wind, but we had not ridden far when it occurred to us that we were describing a circle, and on consulting the compass it told us that we were going almost due south instead of north-west. The compass is a faithless guide in Iceland, but the wind seemed so strongly to corroborate the needle in this case, that we decided to abandon the good and sheltered path, and scrambling up the low, but steep hills that shut us in on the north-eastern side, we urged our poor ponies on again right in the face of the blast. Shortly we hit upon another trail which after a long and dreary ride brought us in sight of the ships lying in *Húsavík* harbour.

Entering the house, we found K.'s gun in a corner and roaring fires in the stoves, so stripping ourselves to the skin, we thawed our bodies and dried our clothes at the same time. It little surprised us to hear that K. had only arrived about two hours before us! In broad daylight and fine weather he had wandered for five hours, and had at last, at one o'clock in the morning, chanced upon a farm lying some sixteen to twenty

miles to the east of *Húsavík*. Here every kindness was shown him, the young couple even giving up their bed to him, with true Icelandic hospitality. He appears to have appreciated the coffee and cakes, and having borrowed the whole family wardrobe and repaid his hosts by a scatter of coppers among the children, had started in the morning with a mounted guide to *Húsavík*.

Our companions arrived an hour later than we, their guide also having wandered and only been set right by a reference to the compass. This universal "losing the way" will be apt to give the reader a very erroneous impression as to the difficulty of keeping the track in Icelandic travel, but a little consideration will show where the fault lies. Our guide and interpreter, Eiríkr (Halldórsson) from *Akureyri*, an excellent and commendable member of his class, had lived for many years at *Húsavík* and had traversed this road scores of times; equally conversant with it too was the under-guide, Ingaldur, (Jónasson) from *Húsavík*, yet they were alike in a fog in every sense of the saying, while we foreigners, who had never seen the track in our lives, were able to put them right. I once remarked that an Icelanders would lose the way between any two places in the world, save the brandy bottle and his mouth, and though I was then a novice among them, my subsequent experience of Icelandic guides forbids me to retract my words. The local synonym, "*fylgi-maðr*," (10) signifies in fact, a follower, and clearly hints that the "guide" follows the traveller. There are exceptions, of course, and I have even been so fortunate as to meet with them, but they are such *rare aves* as to be almost worthy of comparison with the said-to-be-extinct Auk of their native isle. The inexperienced tourist has no alternative but to entrust everything to his "guide," but in time one learns to travel alone, and some of my midnight rides caused no little astonishment to the humdrum natives.

Next morning, as the weather cleared a little, we could see that all the neighbouring eminences were capped, patched, and streaked with pure new snow. The salubrity of the

northern<sup>5</sup> air was manifested by the fact that no one complained of cold or rheumatism, despite yesterday's drenching. Rain still falling at intervals, our excursions were confined to a promenade on the beach, where we noticed an abundance of sandpipers and eider-ducks in their respective elements. We gathered some pieces of pumice as large as cricket-balls from the beach, where they had recently been washed up, and admired the picturesque, weather-worn cliffs, in which sharp-outlined basalt contrasted well with rough, irregular volcanic conglomerate; but the stunted height (sixty to seventy feet) put sublimity out of the question.

The engineer and our sporting companions also returned to head-quarters. The fishermen reported having enjoyed good sport but bad weather. On their homeward ride they saw a large bird chasing whimbrel, and which they opined to be a kite, but I am strongly inclined to think it has been an Iceland falcon.

We had timed our return to *Húsavík* in accordance with the day on which the pony steamer was to call for us. Had we foreseen that her main shaft would break (the third time in a very short life) just as she had made the Icelandic coast, and that she would have to be towed home by a stray fishing-smack and replaced by another vessel, we might have employed our time differently. For ten days we hardly dared move a hundred yards away from our lodging, lest the ship should arrive in our absence, for passengers may wait for pony steamer, but not pony steamer for passengers.

Some of us made investments in articles of native manufacture, but there was nothing valuable nor curious offered, for the flocks of tourists who have lately "done" the island, not unaided by the annual visits of the officers of French and Danish men-of-war, have exhausted the very little that was worth buying, except, of course, such modern productions as

<sup>5</sup> There are two distinct climates in Iceland, caused by the band of towering "*jökullar*" (ice-mountains) which stretch irregularly from east to west across the island. North of this chain the air is pure, bracing, and dry, while in the south it is damp, "muggy," and depressing as in the south of Hampshire.

are in daily use among the people, and of no particular interest.

Presently Sunday came round again, and while the sportsmen betook themselves to their favourite haunt, the Lax-water, their companions turned their thoughts toward witnessing an Icelandic service, and made desperate efforts to look respectable for the occasion. But our good intentions were rudely scattered to the winds by a notice emanating from the old priest, to the effect that as but a small congregation had arrived, he proposed to postpone the ceremony *sine die*,—no uncommon occurrence. Ridding ourselves of those civilized abominations, black coats and starched collars, we resumed our more comfortable *déshabillé*, and planned small excursions. The captain, with two others, hired a large boat, and proceeded to take soundings in the bay, with a view to ascertaining where it would be best that a tramway from the mines should approach the sea, while I threw in my lot with "Verdant Green," and joined him in a canter to the *Surtarbrandr*, or lignite, beds, and the "Agate" mountain of which we had heard so much.

We were in the act of saddling our ponies, when the church bells commenced a peal which might have been likened to a donkey's gallop for shortness and sweetness. Contrary to all precedent (for the old *prestr* was held to be rather lax in the performance of his duty, and twelve services per annum were said to be a good average), he altered his mind, and a few more listeners having arrived, worship was commenced at 2.30. p.m. ; but it was then too late for us to appear duly attired, and we accordingly mounted our steeds and started.

Our route lay northward, first over a small ridge or two, and then across marshy land to *Héðinshöfði* (12) (Hjethinn's headland), a large farm now the residence of my good friend the *Sýslumaðr*, (Sheriff) Benedikt (Sveinsson), the most talented lawyer of all the law-loving sons of Iceland. A reformer and a great orator, he has invoked the bitter wrath of certain high public functionaries whose incapacity he exposed, and to their revengeful influence may doubtless be attributed his

removal from the post of Assessor in *Reykjavík* to that of Sheriff in the county most distant from the capital, though they prefer to point to his deplorably irregular habits as the cause.

At the time of our visit the farm was held by Herra Jóhann (Jónsson), who kindly invited us in and offered us new milk, which we gladly accepted, and meanwhile we enjoyed the view of the bay, with *Lundey* (Puffin island) in the foreground, and *Flatey* (Flat island) far away to westward. *Grímsey* (Grímur's island), bearing almost north and distant about thirty miles, was invisible from this altitude. Here we hired one Jósias (Rafnsson)—Josias the son of the Raven—who was reported to be well acquainted with the *locale* of the "agates" and the "Surtarbrandr." Soon after leaving the farm we descended to the sandy sea-shore, crossing a small torrent called *Kvísl* (13) (Fork) by a wooden bridge surmounted by a half-grown gallows, which compelled us to lie flat upon our ponies' necks to avoid knocking our brains out. We found pumice washed up here as thickly as to the south of *Húsavík*. Eider ducklings, K.'s favourite quarry, simply swarmed, and lying on the rocks were some twenty seals.

At a distance of about five to six miles from *Húsavík*, we reached the *Surtarbrandr* beds. They occur in a steep hill-side composed of volcanic sand, conglomerated with numerous comminuted sea shells, thus falsifying Mr. Baring Gould's implication, that the mineral is found only between layers of basalt. The deposit is probably very limited, we traced the layers, of which there are four, for about 500 yards along the coast, but had no time for ascertaining their extent land-ward, which is no doubt small. Their strike is nearly east to west, and they have a very slight inclination towards the sea, northwards: their total thickness is about five feet. Mining would be impossible except at great cost for lining, and the hill-side would have to be quarried away bodily. It is greatly to be doubted if it would pay to work the beds, as the fuel was found on trial to be little better than peat.

We had been led to suppose that "agate" and lignite were to be found together, presumably in basalt, but we were now assured that there lay some two miles betwixt us and the "agate-mountain," so leaving our specimens on a large rock, we remounted our nags and followed the beach, passing the *Skeifárfoss* (14) (Skew-water-fall), a very pretty but diminutive cascade of some seventy to eighty feet. The bleaching bones of defunct whales and a few bits of rotting shark's flesh did not add many charms to the pretty but desolate scene. Our astonishment was great when, on reaching a hill of sand and shells, such as accompanies the lignite beds, we were informed that we had arrived at *Hallbjarnarstaðakambur* (15) (Hallbjarn's-stead ridge), the renowned "agate-mountain." We decided at once that it was a "sell," and prepared to return home, when our guide brought us a shell containing crystals of common yellow calcite ("Dog-tooth Spar")! Such were the famed "agates." We gathered a few crystals and some of the shells, which latter we found to be all of recent age and represented by living specimens in the neighbouring sea. On our homeward ride I noticed what I thought was a lump of chalk, but, on dismounting, found it to be a stone covered by a deposit of carbonate of lime, the work of a marine vegetable, the Nullipore. We also found some rocks bored by the *Pholas*, and in one of them were the remains of the animal's shell.

About midnight the boating party came in tired, wet, and hungry. They had had a head-wind, and their heavy boat taxed all their strength and skill. Somewhat later K. made his appearance, laden with the spoils of the chase, including two splendid "great Black-backed Gulls" and two falcons, but whether more properly called "Iceland-" or "Jer-" we could not decide.

Followed a day such as old England might be proud of—a real "juicy day." The monotony would have been unbearable but for the delightfully told stories of African adventure and sport with which that true disciple of Nimrod, B., favoured us. K. took up the same strain, and amid screams of

derisive laughter, recounted how he had stalked that tamest of birds, a hen-ptarmigan, and after creeping within ten yards, had bagged the poor creature *sitting* (*!*), or sang the praises of his ill-trained old cur "Ben," who had succeeded in mangling some half-dozen of semi-fledged eider ducklings, which his master positively requested the steward to cook for our dinner.

B.'s sporting proclivities were truly remarkable, and sometimes almost too much so. I remember one evening when his day's sport had been spoilt by bad tackle, that he sat up all through the night replacing the line and repairing the reel of his salmon rod, and the infernal clicking of that reel made sleep an utter impossibility. He nearly committed suicide, when, after carefully arranging his line on the floor, three of us became entangled in it in the twilight, and carried it about our legs into the yard.

Anon Herra Guðjohnson, the resident merchant, presented us with some *hákarl* (16) (prepared shark's flesh), which caused an amusing scene at the breakfast-table. Some sickened and turned pale at the smell, which K. describes as "awful," and it is in fact far worse than the taste. The captain and some of the others did not dislike it, and he played a terrible joke on his two bedroom companions by keeping an immense junk of it under his pillow, to prevent their carrying out a threat to destroy it!

Tuesday, the 27th July, broke fine and bright, and so strongly did we anticipate the arrival of the steamer, that we sent a man with a good glass up a neighbouring hill, to prospect before any of us started to sport. His report was unfavourable, however, not a sail in sight, but the sportsmen had scarcely started for the Laxwater when a cry was raised "There's the 'Fifeshire's' whistle!" at which there was great excitement. Two of us mounted the kitchen chimney, while one of our men scaled the unfinished prison, but our eyes were strained in vain, and we relapsed once more into suspense and uncertainty.

At H.'s suggestion, I joined him in a sea-fishing excursion,

which on the whole was not greatly successful. The cockle-shell which we borrowed from Herra Guðjohnson was unstable as an outrigger, and we had to find and fix wooden pegs for rowlocks, and to knock out the stumps of those which had been broken in. This done, we dragged her down the beach as far as we could without getting wet, and then, instead of hauling her out from the jetty, H. embarked while still hard aground, and commenced frantic efforts to launch himself by aid of an oar. Not an inch could he urge his ship onward, till an incoming roller broke under her gunwale, and half filling her with water, was within an ace of pitching him headlong into the sea. At last we got safely afloat, and H. proceeded to fish, or rather, to put out his hooks, for it could not be said that he fished. He took the oars from me on the homeward voyage, and with marked effect. I was sitting in the stern, quietly ruminating, when I felt a sudden jerk, and on looking up I was astonished to see H.'s heels pointing heavenwards, his head nowhere, and the oars floating gracefully one on either side of the boat! Luckily, I could just reach one of them as it drifted by, and with it we soon recovered the other and brought our little craft to beach.

This evening, a noted drunkard, Bjarni (Þorsteinsson), forced his way into our sitting-room, and nearly upset the captain's mercurial barometer, on which he was promptly ejected, vowing awful vengeance. He was one of the worst examples of native drunkards known to me, and their name is legion. Some years since he shot a man through the head in one of his drunken fits, but escaped punishment on that most convenient plea, insanity.

On Friday, T., H. and I strolled over the boggy land lying between *Húsavík* and *Héðinshöfði*, and tried our luck with the seals, which lay basking in the sunshine on the rocks studding the shore. T. had several long unsuccessful rifle-shots at them, but made some wonderfully good ball practice at one or two sea fowl swimming far out in the bay.

Presently we were joined by Mr. W. L. Watts, a young law-



student, who has gained considerable and well-deserved praise for his journey across the unexplored and unknown snow-fields of the *Vatnajökull*, and whose guide we had already met. In the prime of life, of athletic frame and sound constitution, this adventurous explorer was admirably fitted for enduring the labour and privation of a twelve days' journey through snow, frost, and fog, added to another four days of equally unpleasant tramping across sandy deserts and lava beds; and too much commendation cannot be given him for his pluck and perseverance, and for his having succeeded in persuading some of the prejudiced and superstitious natives to accompany him.

When we had the pleasure of meeting him, he was preaching a universal Exodus to America lest the *Vatnajökull* embrace the island and all it contains within a generation or two! In a paper read before the Royal Geographical Society<sup>6</sup> and in his work referring to the same subject<sup>7</sup> he curtails his prophesy somewhat, but in the former I note the following words: "We find that the *Vatnajökull* is a mass of ice and snow resting upon a nest of volcanoes; that its glaciers are rapidly increasing; that it is encroaching both upon the north and upon the south; and, granting that the *Vatna* is a fair specimen of the Icelandic jökulls, that nothing can save Iceland from the advancing glaciers but a cycle of propitious seasons." The growth of the glacier southwards he considers proved by the fact that it is almost touching the sea, while he does not attempt to show that it has not done so before. His theory of the northward extension is based upon a comparison of his own observations with tracks and points laid down upon the Olsen-Gunnlaugsson map of the island. Now, without wishing to be rude, I venture to submit that too much dependence must not be placed on either. The map is notoriously incorrect except on the coast, and especially so in the neighbouring *Dyngjufjöll* (17), as Mr. Watts will himself admit,—why, therefore, calculate on its being abnormally accurate

<sup>6</sup> Proceedings R.G.S. Vol. xx. No. 1, pp. 21—32. December 31st, 1875.

<sup>7</sup> "Across the *Vatnajökull*." (Longmans.)

regarding the *Vatnajökull*? I doubt also if even he will place much confidence in his own recorded observations, when he remembers the damaged condition of his instruments, the incessant fog, and his hasty march, compelled by prospects of starvation. Native accounts agree absolutely in denying a northward increase of the *Vatnajökull*, or an extension of any of the other "*jöklar*."

The last day of July was ushered in by a fog that London might envy, but despite this wet blanket, K. and I set out on pony-back at 9 a.m., to throw a fly in the *Skjálfandafljót* (Shivering-flood). We followed the road to *Laxamýri* (18) (Salmon swamp), till within half a mile of the farm-house, and then struck off to the west, making straight for the *Laxá* falls, which are about 600 or 700 yards from the river mouth. There is a ford where ponies can cross just above the falls, and a ferry boat about forty yards below. The river, which is here banked on the south side by lava and on the north by volcanic conglomerate, falls about ten feet. Just on the brink it is split into some half-dozen channels by high rocks, which add to the picturesqueness of the cascade if they break the volume of water. Being provided with long boots, I rode across at the ford and led my companion's pony, while he ferried himself over. I observed several salmon leap the fall without emerging from the water.

Leaving the river at 10.20, we crossed a very old lava bed, scarcely above the level of the Laxwater and almost entirely covered with fine volcanic sand, which was overgrown with wild oats and rushes, and at eleven reached *Sílalækur* (Herring brook), a farm on the edge of the lava bed and occupied by Jónas (Guðmundsson). After taking a cup of coffee with Herra Jónas, we started under his guidance to fish in the *Miklavatn* (19), (Mickle-water), a very shallow body of water close to the farm, disposed east-west, about one and a half miles long and a quarter mile wide, and said to contain many char. K. failed to obtain even a rise, but it was covered with a great variety of wildfowl, some of which fell to our guns, and were retrieved by the ancient Ben.

Riding westward about three quarters of a mile across swampy ground, we reached the *Skjálfandafljót*, at about two miles from its mouth. Here the stream is sluggish, moderately deep, say ten to fifteen feet, and at least 400 yards wide from bank to bank, but much of this width is occupied by low sandy islets which, about a mile higher up, where the stream spreads considerably, assume larger proportions and supply some few sheep with pasturage. The bed of the stream, as far as I could see, is a fine volcanic sand, the water is beautifully clear, having had time to rid itself of glacial mud in its long journey from the central "*jöklar*." It runs nearly due north and hereabouts is bounded on the west by the snow-tipped *Víknafljöll* (Pumice-mountains) range, and on the east by a very old bed of vitreous, cavernous lava, said by Jónas (and shown in the map), to have come from the neighbourhood of *Mývatn*. The river is said to contain a few salmon, and I should say it is very few: we failed to detect any signs of its fishiness.

Feeling athirst, we jumped the ditch which drains the *Miklavatn* into the river and rode to *Sandr* (Sand), a farm about 600 yards from the bank, to find Herra Friðjón (Jónsson) busied with his hay harvest. His neat, obliging, and pretty wife, however, soon made us some delicious coffee, laced with cream that would excite envy in the breast of a Devonshire dairy-maid. For an immense bowl of new milk and six cups of this delicious coffee, with a plateful of Danish rusks, we were asked but eighty *aurar*, and when, for lack of small change, we paid her 1 *króna* (= 100 *aurar* or 13½*d.*), we so delighted her that she was in two minds about kissing us.

A caustic writer in a well-known Review, whose personal acquaintance with Iceland (if indeed he has any at all) is certainly confined to *Reykjavík* and its neighbourhood, says that "a rush of vulgar Englishmen \* \* \* has spoilt the character of the people and bids fair to turn it into as mercenary a race as exists upon the face of the earth." That the mongrel inhabitants of the capital could compete with any Levantine, I have little doubt, but let the traveller get out amongst the country

folk and his experience will be as mine, that the simple-minded, hospitable peasants have not degenerated. At any rate Madame Jónsson had not, and further on we shall see how I fared at the hands of the people in all parts of the country, from *Seyðisfjörður* to *Húsavík* and from *Akureyri* to *Reykjavík*.

Herra Friðjón returned home during our stay, and we questioned him by signs and a few stray words of Icelandic, as to our chance of seal-hunting in the river, but he told us that we might not indulge in this very unsportsmanlike sport at this season of the year, and I afterwards learnt that the Phocæ are not pursued later than May. We found the farmer a smart, good-looking fellow, and a well-furnished carpenter's shop showed his mechanical turn of mind.

Disappointed in our seal-hunting, we determined to try for Ptarmigan in the lava beds, and, riding back to the river to avoid a small lake and its accompanying swamp, we followed its now somewhat devious course for about a mile, and then turned eastwards again into the burnt region. From here we could plainly see the cloud of spray from the *Ullarfoss* (Wool fall), some five or six miles higher up the stream.

A short ride brought us to *Hraunkot*(20) (Lava cot) a prettily and appropriately named cottage nestling in a little oasis in the cavernous lava. Here Jósías (Kristjánsson), the young occupier, has a good sized garden planted with potatoes in double rows. Almost immediately after leaving the cottage in the lava we flushed a brood of ten ptarmigan, of which my companion bagged the tame old mater by a sitting shot at close range, but the now well-grown and strongly-flying chicks were too much for him. This lava bed is said to be the habitat of many of these delicious birds, but, in a longish ride, we failed to see any more.

After a draught of milk at *Síllalækur* and settling with Jónas, we prepared to start home, so as to be in time for dinner. A man named Árne (Jónsson) á *Skörðum* (21) rode up at this moment and bothered us to let him guide us over the *Laxá*,

but as we knew the way, and had no wish for the company of a very drunken fellow, we persistently refused his services. We little guessed the fate that awaited him. Jónas sent him after us with a fishing-reel that had been left at his house, but either the rider or his pony mistook the ford on the Laxwater, and both were drowned. The animal was carried six miles out into the bay, but the man was found sticking in the sand and mud where he had evidently fallen from the pony. The following letter concerning the missing reel reads like an Irish production. It was written by the sub-factor at *Húsavík*, who was also drowned last spring in a trading-vessel that foundered during the Easter storms off the north coast: it runs, "You, Sir, have forgot your fishing-reel, by Jonas, farmer on Silalæk, and he has sent it bake with the man, who was drowned the other day in Laxá river. If the dead man will be found, you will get the reel again; but it is impossible before."

On Sunday, Mr. Watts photographed the members of our expedition, and at 12.30 we formed part of the congregation at the neighbouring church. As both the building and the service were of the usual character, it may be admissible here to give a short description of them. And first of the sacred edifice. Built of wood, and situated in a railed-off plot of land which is used as a grave-yard, it is unprovided with a steeple, but two small bells are hung under the projecting roof just over the doorway, and these proclaim the commencement and likewise the finish of the ceremony. Ranged on either side of the middle passage are the pews, high-backed, narrow benches, painted sky-blue and placed so close together as to ensure the minimum of comfort, but useful, perhaps, in this, that sleepers (who will be numerous) cannot fall to the floor. The Communion Table is draped with a handsome cloth, apparently of silk, and on the altar stand two immense pewter candle-sticks, with a lighted yard of native tallow in each. Over the altar hangs a painting, which has presumably some reference to the Last Supper, but the artist, not having followed the example of the draughtsman who wrote under

his sketch, "This is a lion," has left the world in doubt upon the subject.

From the open wood-work roof depend two chandeliers, one gilt, the other of cut glass, and adorned with rows of hanging prisms. Over the doorway is a small loft, railed, painted and varnished, and used as a general warehouse. Paint has been bestowed on the sacred building with a lavishness almost appalling. The wooden walls are daubed with ultramarine, beaded alternately with green and yellow; the pulpit and the screen are of bright green with a scarlet border; the font is azure on a chocolate-coloured pedestal, while the roof is mauve-tinted.

Though the service be Lutheran, the vestments would not ill become a Ritualist in the matter of gaudiness, in fact it was a matter of doubt to us whether the church or the parson was the "louder" and less decorous. The prayers were intoned in a voice that suggested a town-crier under the unfavourable influence of a very bad cold; singing was performed in a sitting posture, and we were treated to a sermon lasting half-an-hour, read *sotto voce*. The congregation numbered about twenty-five, the sexes being almost equally represented, and of this number three were children, one an infant in arms. The male listeners yawned and gaped like English rustics, turned round to stare out of window, spat about the floor disgustingly, went out occasionally for a breath of air and a chew of tobacco, and returned refreshed thereby, while one of their number devoted himself to snuffing the altar candles. The women, on the contrary, paid particular attention to the service, and several were moved to tears. At the conclusion, the officiating priest shook hands with each individual, wishing they might benefit by what they had heard, and they in turn thanked him for the advice he had given them, but there was no kissing.

After church we went to see the small earth-split caused by the '72 earthquake. We found it a most puny affair, a mere crack a few inches wide, in some parts scarcely traceable, and running from the sea-cliffs just outside the church-

yard, (it probably originated in a hot spring on the beach which has since been quiescent,) for a distance of some five to six miles, skirting the two lakes *Botnsvatn* and *Höskuldsvatn*, and terminating at the latter place in a small mound, which is split in all directions.

As the "Fifeshire" made no appearance our patience gradually became exhausted, and viewing the lack of provision at *Húsavík*, it was seriously discussed that we should at once proceed to *Akureyri*, and there fit out for the overland journey to *Reykjavík*, so that we might sail thence on the 5th September in the Danish mail-boat. When it was put to the vote, however, three of us only were in favour of it, while the others, regarding the consequences to their pockets, and possibly to their posteriors also, suggested "Wait a little longer." Mr. Watts then advised us to kill time by a trip to the *Asberg* (22) cliffs and the *Dettifoss* (Tumbling cascade), and those of our party who availed themselves of the opportunity to visit those highly interesting scenes must be thankful to him for his kind hint.

An hour and a half after midday on the 4th of August found a party of us, accompanied by the steward and a couple of guides, threading our way along that marvellous bit of made road which traverses the two hundred yards of peat-bogs lying to the east of *Húsavík*. Leaving this masterpiece of some local MacAdam, we ascended the heather and grass covered slopes skirting three sides of the *Botnsvatn*, and in half-an-hour's fair riding, always uphill, entered the *Grjótháls* (23) (Grit-house), one of those stony, sandy deserts, of which there are so many in Iceland, bleak, desolate, depressing to the spirits, and very tiring to the ponies, without possessing a single redeeming feature. On reaching *Höskuldsvatn* (*Höskuldur's* water), at the eastern edge of the little desert, we sat down to break our fast on the mound which marks the limit of the earth-split before mentioned. Hitherto, our route had been identical with the track leading to Guillemot-reeks, but from this point the paths diverge, and we now struck the *Bláskógavegr* (24) (Blue shaw way). This was a decidedly

pretty contrast to the wild waste we had just left. A lava bed of untold age (the *Skinnstakkahraun*)<sup>8</sup> has been so far disintegrated and decomposed by the action of the elements, that a dwarf birch forest has sprung up and thriven, and was at this season scenting the air deliciously, and adding other charms to the scene by forming the resort of innumerable red-winged thrushes (*Skógar-Þrostr*,—shaw-thrush—in Icelandic), who chirped and fluttered through the low branches in all directions. At intervals we obtained glances of the sea; and the far distant peaks on the western shore of the huge headland which juts out between the *Axarfjörður*, and the *Þistilfjörður* (Axe and Thistle-firths) appeared like islands. Now and again the little lava-cracks, which in this class of country render travelling out of the track highly dangerous to the legs of the ponies, assumed grander proportions and were worthy of the name *gjá* (25), which signifies a considerable rift. Some of them were a fathom broad and twenty to forty feet deep, still hiding some of last year's snow in their inmost recesses, and crossed here and there by natural stone bridges. All appeared to be the result of shrinkage when the molten mass cooled, and not to have been caused at a subsequent date by earthquakes.

Between 10 and 11 p.m., still in broad daylight, we reached the farm, *As*.

This is a *tvíbýli*, that is to say there are two separate houses on the same *tún*, and we prospected for beds in each habitation, but with only moderate success. The captain and C. shared the shelter of the entrance lobby, while K. committed his six feet two and a half inches of "ulster," boots and gaiters, to the kitchen, and the remainder of our party put up a tent and slept in it as well probably as did our companions in the house.

We arose at 7 next morning, and by 9.45 were cantering merrily in the direction of *Dettifoss*, under the guidance of our host at *As*, who has since formed one of the band of misguided colonists induced to leave kith and kin and a comfortable

<sup>8</sup> *Skinnstakka*, or *stakkr*, is the skin coat worn by fishermen.



home in order to seek a no better and possibly worse lot in Canada or North America. Our excellent guide led the way at a fair pace, the path leading for the first hour over the same picturesque lava-bed, with its fragrant birch scrub, pretty heathers and chirping songsters, which we had traversed yesterday. Then we descended for a moment to a great sandy hollow, close by the river (*Jökulsá í Axarfirði*—Glacier river in Axefirth), for though we had always been following its course, our path lay hitherto at some distance from the stream. The scenery here is really grand—a wild weird spot that would charm an artist. Between us and the river arose, almost as it were from the very bed of the rushing torrent, the *Hljóðaklettur* (Sounding or echoing cliffs), a nest of prehistoric craters, which have poured out alternately lava and stones and ashes. What a fearful war of the elements must here have been when these eruptions took place; the red-hot ejecta causing the river to boil, while the continuous torrent of icy water endeavoured to drown the fire. But the liquid element, though perhaps temporarily vanquished, has at length gained the victory, and the sandy soil on the western bank, and a great portion of the less coherent part of the craters themselves has been eroded by the river to an extent that clearly shows a mighty decrease in recent times in the volume of water poured down by it, and perhaps also a corresponding diminution of the snows of the *Vatnajökull* which feed it. The cliffs rise to a height of about 200 feet perpendicularly and present a wall-like appearance. The erosion of some of the softer parts has well exposed the contorted and picturesque forms of the inter-jacent lava. One or two of the craters show a very distinct circular shape. The eastern shore is a wall of basaltic lava rising sheer from the deep, muddy, villainous-looking torrent which rushes by at its base. The scene might fitly form an illustration for Dante's *Inferno*.

Scrambling up the path that led out of the great hollow into which we had descended, our route lay for half an hour over willow-patched, well-watered, grassy land, till reaching

*Svínadalr* (Swine-dale) farm. Here we stayed to give the ponies a nibble of grass, and to drink coffee ourselves. From the house we could well see *Eylífshnúkr* (Eylifur's knoll) raising his head from the desert lying between us and *Reykjahlíð*. After spending nigh one and a half hours at this convenient half-way house, we restarted at 12.40, our road now lying over part of a *sandr*, or stony and sandy desert, which stretches almost unbroken for about fifty miles. These *sandar* are worse to travel over than even lava itself, in dry weather the dust is choking, but in wet weather the surface becomes a stone bog into which the ponies sink to their knees and get dreadfully cut and worn out.

Little more than an hour's ride brought us to *Rauðhóll* (Red Hill), a ferruginous looking hill, marking the site of the *Hafragill* (26) (He-goat gill) and its accompanying *foss*. Here the river runs through a fine gorge of basalt 250 feet high, resembling, but not equalling, the Danubian iron gates. Pushing on, at 3 we reached a small patch of wild oats, where we left our ponies to graze while we scrambled over the 100 yards or so of rocky ground which still separated us from the fall.

Our first glimpse of the *Dettifoss* showed us that Mr. Baring Gould's sketch,<sup>9</sup> so far from exaggerating, really gives but a faint idea of the grandeur of the scene. Two views which appeared in the "Illustrated London News" of Aug. 24th, 1872, represent it better, but they also fall far short of the reality. Usually, waterfalls are most uninteresting natural objects, not worth going a yard to see, but the attractions of this, the finest fall in Europe, are much enhanced by the peculiar wildness and weirdness of its surroundings. It may be viewed too, from almost every direction. Above it is a very pretty panorama, including a series of rapids where the thick yellow water is dashed about between basaltic walls in the wildest possible manner; and the ordinarily daring traveller can descend the rocky buttresses almost to the river level, and thus obtain an upward sight, which will convey

<sup>9</sup> "Iceland : its Scenes and Sagas." (Smith and Elder.)

better than any other, a conception of the magnificent proportions of the fall and of the *gjd*, or cañon, into which it plunges. The shape of the fall more nearly approaches a V than a horse-shoe, the water descending about 180 feet into the jaws of an immense lava-rift some 500 feet wide, which here abruptly terminates. The ordinary width of the leaping waters is about 400 yards, but that is greatly increased, perhaps doubled, during the Spring floods, when the mad career of huge blocks of ice hustling each other over the brink, must form an almost appallingly grand scene.

Infinitely pleased with what we had seen, we cantered back to *Ás*, and arrived there without incident a few minutes before 9 p.m.

While strolling around our tent after supper, we espied two Icelanders riding towards us as if "possessed," and on their nearer approach we found one of them to be Páll (Pálsson), who had been kindly despatched in great haste by Mr. Watts, to inform us that a steamer would call for our party next day. The more home-sick of our companions rejoiced at the news like school-boys released from study, and K. and young H., meeting for once on neutral ground, tried which could shy his hat higher, and forgot to quarrel about who was victor.

The reason for the delay in the arrival of our transport, briefly stated, was this. The S.S. "Fifeshire," which had taken us out, made a good passage home, and sailed again from Granton on the 19th July. When off the Iceland coast her screw-shaft broke (an event rendered none the less easy, perhaps, by its having happened twice before to the same shaft), and while drifting about at the mercy of the wind and waves, a French fishing-smack fell in with her and towed her back to the Færoes. The engineer sailed to the Shetlands, and thence telegraphed the state of affairs to the charterer, who at once (on the 27th) sent another steamer, the "Buda," which calling at the Færoes, for the "Fifeshire's" mail bags, dropped into *Húsavík* to warn us that after shipping a cargo of ponies at *Borðeyri* further westwards, she would take up the "expedition."

Next morning we were up betimes, and by six o'clock had levelled our tent and tied it up ready for the packsaddle. By 8.30 we were all in the saddle, K. having started two hours previously—an arrangement which admirably suited all parties. We had decided to ride through the *Ásberg* as it lay *en route*, and in a short time we found ourselves entering what appeared to be a *cul-de-sac*, but was in reality only half of a demicircular hollow, enclosed by mighty perpendicular basaltic cliffs, the other half being hidden from us by an intervening buttress that divides the mouth of the dell. Approaching from the east, the walls rise gradually from the level of the surrounding country, and culminate at the westernmost extremity of the bend in a height of at least 300 feet, while the isolated buttress before mentioned called the *Ey*, or island, (a name that may or may not be only figurative) attains nearly as great an elevation. In the sheltered hollow a colony of dwarf birches has thriven remarkably, and forms almost the finest *Skógr*, or wood, in Iceland. In speculating upon the origin of this immense chasm, conflicting theories crowd upon the mind. Whence came the basaltic lava which forms the walls? is the hollow a now greatly disfigured crater? has the land between the barriers sunk to a depth of 300 feet? or has the lava, on cooling, shrunk to such an extent as to form this cleft two miles in length, and at least a quarter of a mile wide? how are the water-rolled pebbles to be accounted for? has the sea or the *jökulsá* laved these towering cliffs, or has a lake nestled among them?

I know of no study promising greater interest than that of the geology, apart from the lithology of Iceland, and the *Ásberg* is a spot which would demand no small share of the student's attention.

The ride to *Húsavík* was a hard one for the ponies. Poor brutes! it seemed as though they had not had a sufficiently bad time of it, that we were compelled to go "like dee-vils" up to the last moment. A day was spent in packing up and fruitlessly looking out for the steamer; but at midday on the 8th she cast anchor in the bay.

It having been arranged that I should cross the island to *Reykjavik* (Reek-wich: it reeks almost as much as its great namesake, Auld Reekie), I now bade my companions *au revoir* with a light heart, rejoiced at the prospect of seeing new scenes.

#### NOTES ON OUR SPORT.

A fair idea of the sport to be had in and about the *Laxá* that flows into the *Skjálfandi*, will be conveyed by the following register.

July 25.—Three rods: Seventy trout, 89lbs., and one salmon 7½lbs. One gun: Two Iceland falcons, two great black-backed gulls, and seven whimbrel.

— 27.—One rod: Twenty-seven trout, 30½lbs. One gun: Three plovers, one ptarmigan, and one teal.

— 28.—Three rods: One salmon, 14lbs.; forty-three trout, 46lbs. One of the latter was pronounced to be a "gillaroo" trout,—hitherto, I believe, found only in one lake in Sutherlandshire, and in two in Ireland.

— 30.—Two rods: Three salmon, 15lbs., 11lbs., and 7½lbs., and innumerable trout. One gun: Great northern diver, goosander, golden-eye duck, and several teal.

— 31.—One rod: Two salmon, 15lbs. and 9lbs., and lost five more by bad tackle.

Aug. 1.—One rod: One grilse 8½lbs.; one trout 8½lbs.

— 3.—One rod: Twenty-five trout and three salmon, 13lbs., 11½lbs., and 5½lbs. One gun: Three brace ptarmigan.

— 6.—Two rods: Four salmon, 21lbs., 17½lbs., 6½lbs. and 6lbs.

I should add that all the sportsmen were strange to the stream, and that none believed in the existence of salmon, until it was conclusively proved by one of the party hooking and landing a fine specimen with a trout fly. Salmon flies were then first used, but complaints were general that the trout were so plentiful as to give the salmon little chance of

getting at the bait, which is indeed shown by the heavy baskets of trout.

There are anglers and anglers: we had both. Thus our hero K., anxious though he was to collect feathered specimens wherewith to garnish the ancestral hall, still had serious hankerings after salmon and trout, and was fain to share his precious moments between the two kinds of sport in a manner which, if somewhat original, aptly illustrates the Arcadian simplicity of fish and bird life in these regions. Having cast his fly upon the waters, it was his wont to wander, gun in hand, bent upon destruction to old mother ptarmigans and their fledglings, returning anon to haul in his fly. I say *haul* in, advisedly, for he had no better idea of angling than a Frenchman has of fox-hunting, and simply dragged his fish out of water by main force. Yet the simple trout submitted to this treatment without a protest, and eagerly took the fly when it chanced that the said fly was there to be taken, and had not been whipped off in the cast.

## CHAPTER III.

## GALLOP WITH A LADY ACROSS THE STOURSAND.

Baron of Bucklivie,  
 May the foul fiend drive ye,  
 And a' to pieces rive ye,  
 For building sic a town,

Where there's neither horse meat, nor man's meat, nor a chair  
 to sit down. *Scottish Rhyme.*

As Herra Guðjohnson intended making a flying visit to his parents in the southern capital, he kindly suggested that I should join him, and during the few days that intervened between the departure of my comrades and the commencement of our long ride, he very hospitably insisted upon my accepting superior quarters at his hands.

Early on the morning of the 10th of August, we said good-bye to the small circle of friends, bestowed kisses on a few of them, and leapt into our saddles. We form quite a family party: there are Madame Guðjohnson, who is to accompany us as far as *Ljósavatn*; Jómfrú (Miss) Magneir Guðjohnson and her brother Herra G. bound for *Reykjavík*; several of Herra G.'s little sons who will leave us at *Laxamýri*; Mr. Watts and his chief guide Páll (Pálsson); Valdimar, Herra G.'s clerk, whose opinion of himself is not shared by others, and who acts as riding companion to Madame G.; a couple of servants, one of whom, Pétr, will keep our company to *Reykjavík*, and the author. Most of us had a change of horses, and two animals were under packsaddles. My three mounts, sound but ancient, were purchased of the horse-dealers for 10*l.* each, having cost a few days previously, probably, 4*l.* 10*s.* per head.

Passing *Gvendarsteinn* (*Guðmundr's* stone ; *Gvendr* is short for *Guðmundr*, as Dick for Richard), a huge cairn of stones, said—with what truth I know not—to mark the spot where a certain Bishop of that name hid from his persecutors, we reached *Laxamýri*. Here we spent some time in discussing the good cheer, provided for us by the hospitable Herra Sigurjón (Jóhannesson), and in admiring his well-built house, whose portal is surmounted by a carved representation in wood of a salmon and a pair of eider-ducks. This carving is the pride of the county, and is the work of a certain Guðmundr (nearly every man whose name is not Jón is a Guðmundr) at *Húsavík*, who, when young, left his nose as a legacy to Copenhagen acquaintances—a fate impossible in his native isle.

This house at *Laxamýri* is a good example of the progress made of late years in the construction of the native habitations. In 1863, Mr. Baring Gould, who travelled far and wide, considered *Hnausar* as the best built farm-house in Iceland, but I, twelve to fifteen years later, found some twenty its equals and several decidedly its superiors, of which Herra Sigurjón's will carry off the palm for strength, style, and finish.

Leaving our kind entertainers, we forded the *Mýrakvísl* (Bog fork) and cantered over the *Hvammshéði* (27) (Valley heath) at a good pace, noticing two very tame Iceland falcons, *en route*. When near *Langavatn* (Long water) one of our loose horses bolted across the swampy valley and caused immense fun. Herra G., Mr. Watts, Valdimar, and I, being well mounted, gave chase, over rotten ground full of ditches. In one of these Valdimar came to utter grief ; his pony changed his mind suddenly on reaching the brink, and left his rider to fly headlong to the other side, while he coolly waded through, and then waited patiently to be remounted. The truant turned and doubled like a hare, and we only secured him at last by driving him to a farm.

At *Geitafell* ([She-]Goat fell), just to the south of *Langavatn*, we stayed to drink milk and to tighten the loads on



the ponies, preparatory for the long stage that lay before us over the horrid *Mývatns-sandr* (Midge-lake sand) or *Holasandr* (A.S. *hol*: Eng. *Hole*-sand) as it is also called.

*Grimstaðir* (Grimur's stead) the home of Jakob (Hálfðánarson), was reached at 8.15 p.m., and after our dusty ride we greatly enjoyed a bath in Midge Lake. Though a large farm, but scant accommodation was procurable, and while Mrs. and Miss Guðjohnson occupied the only spare bed in the house, the rest of us retired booted and clothed to the shelter afforded by a turf hut filled with hay, called a "*hey-garðr*" (hay-garden, or yard), and slept right well in our primitive bed.

It was 11 o'clock when we got under weigh next morning, and crossing the little patch of intervening lava, pulled up at *Reykjahlíð*, where much time was spent in again drinking coffee. Proceeding almost due south over an old and very picturesque lava-field, and skirting the eastern shore of the Midge Lake, we made short calls at *Vogar* (28) (Baylets) and at *Geiteyjarströnd* (Goat island strand). Shortly after leaving the latter farm we came upon a sudden break in the lava-bed, and on the sandy shore of the lake stood three isolated columns of vesicular lava eight to ten feet thick and rising perpendicularly to a height of some twenty feet.

When I visited Midge Water in 1872, in company with Capt. Burton, I fully shared his recorded opinion of its ugliness, as seen from the *Námaskarð* (Mines pass). But the south-eastern shores are extremely picturesque and worthy of all the praise that can be lavished on them; in fact, were it not for its nearness to the interesting volcanic phenomena of the *Hlíðarnúmar* (Slope pits) and *Krafla*, I would dissuade all tourists from visiting *Reykjahlíð*, and let them rather confine themselves to the south end of the lake, and make *Skútustaðir* (29) (Skutur's stead) their headquarters.

Passing numerous conical hills of sand, which appear to have been thrown up by volcanic agency, we crossed a couple of broadish arms of the lake, and mounted a steep rise to *Garðr* (A.S. *geard*, Eng. *garden, yard*), whence we got a fine

view of the surrounding country. To the north, across the lake, rise the black trachyte points of *Hlíðarfjall* (Ledge mountain); due east from us stands *Bírfell* (Bower-fell)(30), marking the termination of the *Óddá(31)-hraun* (Ill-deed lava); in the south-east towers *Bláfjall* (Blue mountain), looking down on the *Fremri-udmar* and the Holy valley before mentioned; while due south we have the *Grænavatn* (Green-water) and the unambitious hill of *Sellandafjall* (Seal lands mountain). A short scamper hence brought us to the flourishing farm of *Skútustaðir*, the residence of the genial young clergyman *Síra Jón* (Þorsteinsson).

While waiting for the inevitable coffee, we strolled into the church, in which we saw nothing of particular note. There was the usual charming variety of colour displayed on walls, pews, and pulpit, and over the altar hung a wonderful representation of the Last Supper, supported on one side by a likeness, or rather unlikeness, of Saint Peter, bearing a huge mystic key, and on the other side by a very meek-looking Saint Paul, brandishing a drawn sword.

Riding hence over swampy grass-land, we crossed the *Krák* (Crow [Croak] water), a good-sized stream coming from the south of the *Sellandafjall* and falling into the *Laxá* near *Mývatn*. After fording the river, two of our loose horses deliberately bolted back towards the farm we had just left, and Mr. Watts and I hunted them for nearly an hour before we could get them into the path again.

By the time that we arrived at *Helluvað* (32) (Slate wade) it was quite dark, but we had made up our minds to reach *Ljósavatn* before halting, and accordingly we only rested a moment while the guide who was to join us caught a pony for his own riding, and then hurried forward in inky darkness, with little consideration for the comfort of our lady companions, who in true Icelandic style maintained the greatest cheerfulness and vivacity throughout their long weary ride.

At *Úlfsbær* (33) (Wolf-by) we engaged a man to lead us across the *Skjálfandafjót*. It is a common feature in Icelandic travel to hire a man to guide your guide's guide, and it is a

fact which provokes some reflection. The language is so rich in expressions for even the smallest variety of feature in the physical geography of the island, that one would expect great perceptive powers in the natives; and incessant travel might well be supposed to engrave indelibly in their minds the paths which they have trodden for years; but this is emphatically not the case. We have seen of what use were our "guides" during the unpleasant ride from *Þeistareykir*, to *Húsavík*, but later I met with worse examples. Out of an immense circle of Icelandic acquaintances I know of only three men who really seem to have any notion of finding their way about. As day broke we reached the river, which was deep even at the well-chosen ford, and the ladies did not escape a wetting, though their curious arm-chair saddles, with depending footstools, enabled them to hug their knees.

Despite their damp state, the ladies voted for a visit to the *Goðafoss* (34) (The Gods' ~~foß~~),<sup>1</sup> which lies a few hundred yards below the ford. The cascade is semicircular and in two main streams, divided by an island of rock. The breadth of the fall is considerable, but the depth is insignificant; the gorge into which the river plunges is about fifty feet deep, and nearly 100 yards wide, which quickly narrows to sixty or seventy feet. About half a mile lower down is the *Geitafoss* (Goat ~~foß~~), where the river leaps in one stream, about twenty-five feet deep and thirty feet broad. Near here is a curious circular well-like hole in the rocks, some forty feet deep and reaching the river's edge. The eccentric little apothecary at *Akureyri* once tried to jump across it while under the influence of a potent draught, but he jumped into it instead, and reached the bottom head first. Of course he was not killed, and to this day he bears a fearful scar on his forehead, of which indeed he is mighty proud. There are many cavernous-looking holes in the rocks about this fall, and I suspect it is rather here than under the *Goðafoss* that search should be made for the cave to which the native hero Grettir is said to have dived.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Baring Gould spells it *Goðafoss* (Good fall), which is incorrect.

A very short gallop brought us to *Ljósavatn* (Light water) at 5.30 a.m. After a mouthful of refreshment we slept till 9.30, then arose to breakfast and were in our saddles again by two in the afternoon. The small church, built of turf in the "herring-bone" pattern, has a lych-gate with two bells. There is a carved woodwork screen, and over the altar hangs a painted board, on which are stuck three little wooden images, intended, I suppose, to represent the Crucifixion. The *chef-d'œuvre* bears date 1814, but already our Saviour has been despoiled of an arm.

Immediately after crossing the *Djúpá* (Deep water) draining the *Ljósavatn* into the *Skjálfandafljót*, Madame Guðjohnson and Valdimar left us, to return by another route to *Húsavík*. We then scampered through the *Ljósavatnusskarð* (Light water pass), far too fast to fully enjoy its pretty scenery and the delicious fragrance of the birch scrub growing on the flank of the hill which bounds the valley northward, and where charcoal-burners may sometimes be seen destroying the little that remains of a once fine wood.

*Háls* (Hause) was passed at a hand-gallop, and then riding through a corner of the *Háls-skógr* (Hause-shaw), which Mr. Baring Gould calls the finest in Iceland (wrongly, as I think), we descended the sandy slope and crossed the *Fnjóská* (*fnjósker*, mod. *hnjósker* = touchwood), a swift and stony river, at an excellent ford.

Taking the *Þingmannavegr* (Members of Parliament's way), the only track across the *Vaðlaheiði* (35) which has any claim to be called a road, we soon climbed over the narrow steep-sided ridge and reached the shores of the *Eyjafjarðará* (Island firth water) at its entrance to the bay.

As the tide was only at half-flood, we were able to ford the half-dozen arms of the river without the water entering our boots, but Pétur drove the packhorses too far seawards, and they had to swim for it, which feat did not permanently improve our clothing and provisions. Still we fared better than another traveller, who tells us that he found the water so deep, that in the absence of a change of clothes, he had no alternative but to strip, and then wrap a waterproof coat around

him, lest inquisitive fair ones should be promenading on the further shore. His useless guide Oddr (Gíslason)—Grimr—omitted to tell him that a boat might be got at a farm five minutes' ride from the ferry. *Akureyri*<sup>2</sup> (Acre-beach) was reached at 7 p.m. We fared well at the hands of Host Jensen. A bottle of cognac, ostentatiously labelled "*Qualité supérieure!*" was scarcely what it professed to be, but then the price was not excessive, and altogether I was well pleased with my first experience of the northern capital.

At 10 p.m. Mr. Watts left us and galloped back to *Ljósavatn*, whence he crossed the island by the *Sprengisandr* (36) (Bursting sand), so called because horses are liable to "break their hearts," as sporting men say, in crossing the waterless, grassless desert.

Next morning the country had to be scoured for one of our horses which had strayed. Learning of whom he had been purchased, we despatched a man straight to the farm, and behold there was the truant, hopping about in his hobbles among his former companions, and apparently flattering himself that he had done his duty in returning home.

Our party was now reduced to Hr. G. and his sister, the servant Peter, and the author. About midday on the 14th, we bade adieu to our friends (some of whom accompanied us for about a mile before exchanging the final kiss and dram) and pursued our journey, crossing the *Glerá* (37) (Glass water) near the Icelandic trading Co.'s store on the promontory of *Oddeyri* (38). The beautiful climate of this country does much to mitigate the evils attendant upon the hard drinking, which is the main feature of a leave-taking all the world over; but when I say that within an hour we were compelled to drink alternately of cognac, schnapps, claret, beer, champagne, port, and sherry, all of the vilest quality, the reader will be apt to exaggerate our condition.

The efforts necessary to ensure maintenance of our equilibria were not such as to prevent our enjoying the

<sup>2</sup> *Eyri*, anc. *eyrr* = a gravelly bank either on a river or firth, or tongues of gravelly land running out into the sea.

scenery of the firth, as we followed its western shore to *Glæsibær* (Shining by). Coffee was again made the excuse for a delay, which enabled us to inspect the small new church. It is neater than most and, standing exposed to all winds, is chained for security to four huge boulders, one at each corner, a novelty in ecclesiastical architecture, whose comic rather than its practical side first strikes the eye.

The road hence lies due west across a low hill spur till reaching the *Öxnadalr* (Oxen dale) when it runs S.W. along the grassy farm-studded valley. From the bend in the path we could see the dismal-looking ruins of *Fríðriksgjöf* (39) (Frederick's gift). This was a handsome (for Iceland) stone building, whilom the residence of the *Amtmaðr*, or Governor of the North, as foreigners call him, but has been twice destroyed by fire. The last conflagration occurred in the depth of a hard winter, and the inmates, barely escaping death in the flames, were in danger of meeting it in the shape of frost. The Governor suffered such serious loss that he has been unable to rebuild the pile a second time, and he now occupies a modest wooden house in *Akureyri*.

We crossed the *Bægisá* (Obstructive water: *að bægja* = to push back) a mountain torrent feeding the *Hörgá* (40) (How water), by a stout wooden bridge, and made a short halt at *Steinstaðir* (Stone stead) to drink milk and change horses. The appearance of the pinnacled *Drangufjall* (41) (Isolated peak mountain) on the other side of the valley is very picturesque. It will give a good idea of the amount of traffic on this post road, if I mention that a pipe which my companion dropped hereabouts was found by him on his return from *Reykjavík* three weeks after. A little south of the farm we crossed the *Þverá*,<sup>3</sup> another of those horrid little torrents, that are ten times more dangerous to travellers than the worst of the big rivers; but its simple little bridge helped us over without incident. I did not always fare so well at the same villainous rapid.

<sup>3</sup> Thwart-water, so named from the course being athwart or at right angles to the direction of the main stream which it feeds.

Riding to the head of the *Öxnadalr*, we forded the *Öxnadalsá*, reaching our ponies' girths, and drew rein at *Bakkasel* (42).

One momentary peep into the indescribably filthy farmhouse was sufficient to forbid our making it our sleeping quarters. On a later occasion I had no alternative, but the horrors I then endured shall be narrated in due course. We were provided with a tent measuring about five feet by six, and into this we crawled, our lady companion and we three men, having our saddles for pillows and with no covering but our day clothes, and this too in the middle of August and at a thousand feet above the sea level. Yet we all slept well and arose as fresh as larks on the following morning. So much for the fine air of the place; in England—well,—we should not have tried it.

Before us lay the dreaded *Öxnadalshéiði* (Oxendale heath) a highland desert of sand and stones, everywhere torn by spiteful torrents. We now found it in wonderfully good condition, and galloped across its bleak, dreary wastes right joyfully. Descending then into the *Norðrárdalr* (Northwaterdale), we forded the stream, which gives the valley its name, and followed the northern or right bank, crossing the *Valagilsá* (43) (Falcon gill water) and *Kotá* (Cot water). Now sufficiently mild and innocent, these small rivulets become in spring most fearful torrents, whirling down stones weighing hundreds of pounds with awful velocity, and causing the deaths of many men, ponies, and sheep. Indeed the great banks and stretches of water-worn pebbles, now lying high and dry, show clearly enough the fury that has been and will be again. The *Valagilsá* emerges from a charmingly wild, iron-walled little glen.

After a temporary halt at *Fremri-kot* (Further (south) cot) we scampered over the grassy ground to *Silfrastaðir* (Silverstead), turning out of our way to look at an immense boulder perforated in two places, to which one *Grímr* is said to have bound the ghost of the Norse slave *Skeljúngr*. From their smoothness I judged the holes to have been formed by the slow action of dripping water.

We arrived in time to catch the people coming out of church, so waited a little to refresh ourselves and our ponies, and to learn what we could about the state of roads and rivers on the way to come. The farm is a large and rich one, and the bonder combines the "paying game" of innkeeper with his agricultural pursuits, so that of the forty or fifty churchgoers the male portion could most conveniently gratify their desire for strong drinks *alias* methylated spirits, and we accordingly found the greater number of them supplementing divine service by utter drunkenness, as is the manner of some of their more civilized neighbours.

While refreshment was preparing, we looked into the church. In the lych-gate, half of whose wooden roof is replacd by a shutter, hang two bells. The turf walls of the church lead one to expect a poor interior, but on the contrary, it is a trifle above the average. Over the altar hangs a modern picture of the Crucifixion, Our Saviour hanging on the Cross, between the Virgin Mary, who is dressed in scarlet, and John, enrobed in a suit of pea-green. As if this were not sufficiently out of taste, an immense crinoline was suspended from the rafters, and over the doorway we espied the carved crucifix (minus an arm as usual) which had given way to the new painting.

In the meantime the rain came down in torrents, and we sat awhile at the windows, wondering at the providential good fortune which enabled the awfully drunken farmers to ford with safety the *Norðrá* and *Héraðsvötn* (44) (District waters), where the waters seethed and rushed over their saddles. These inebriates seemed in less danger than the sober females who accompanied them.

We were told that *Síra Jakob á Miklibæ* (Mickle-by) the greatest horse fancier and trainer of his horsey race, intended visiting *Reykjavík*, and in the hope that he might be disposed to join our caravan we made a long *détour* in the pouring rain in order to see him. Unfortunately he was not going for several days, but Icelandic-like he would not tell us this till he had forced us to enter his house and drink wine and coffee, streaming wet and muddy as we were.



Here we hired a guide and cantered down to the banks of the *Héraðsvötn*. On the Gunnlaugsson-Olsen map the two arms of this great river, draining the molten snows from *Hofsjökull* (Heathen temple ice-mountain) are called respectively *Jökulsá vestri* (Western glacier water) and *Jökulsá eystri* (Eastern glacier water), but below their junction they are nameless. At our ford the river was split into more than half a dozen channels, each about twenty yards across, and reaching our ponies' girths, divided by low sand islets; while far-stretching flats of the same character fringing either bank showed the increased dimensions at times assumed by the stream. Our already damped spirits were not enlivened by the horrid mist which now enveloped us, and in solemn silence we followed the very irregular track of our guide through the turbid, revolting waters, which everywhere hide dreaded quicksands, that swallow many a horse with its rider, sucking them down with such force that the man is unable to dismount from his engulfed steed in time to save his own life. The knowledge that these bottomless pits change their position almost daily made us particular to tread in the very footsteps of our leader.

The further bank was at last reached, and our spirits revived, while the weather improved as we receded from the Styx-like flood. We galloped almost due south over grassy land, drained, or rather not drained, by the *Svartá* (Swart water), to *Reykir* (Reeks), so named from the hot springs all around, and, crossing the river, continued our swampy ride to *Mælifell* (45) (Measure fell), which we reached at 9 p.m. This had been confessedly a hard day's work, especially for a young lady, but we had heavier tasks before us, which our fair companion performed with unflagging pluck and good humour.

After a well-merited night's rest we arose early, only to find a heavy fog obscuring everything. So thick was it that the farm lads could not find a sheep, which we needed cooked to feed us on the desert path which lay before us. Without provisions, especially in such weather, a start could not be made, so we resigned ourselves to fate. A ramble round the

byre revealed few novelties, the greatest perhaps being that the Lych gateway to the church really had a gate. Two graves were decently enclosed with wooden railings painted black, tipped with sky-blue; another gloried in a marble cross, while a fourth was surmounted by a memorial stone. The altar picture was of the common species and covered with a cloth for protection—a not unusual practice. A tiny turf hut erected over a rivulet that meanders between the farm-house and the church attracted my notice, for I thought it to be one of the very few instances where the natives have utilized the unparalleled water-force of their country for grinding corn and performing similar labour. But inquiry corrected me. I was told that in winter the snows drift between the banks of the streamlet and bridge it over, thus protecting the liquid from congelation, and preventing its use at the same moment. The hut is built to ensure the first result without the inconvenience of the second.

In and about the *tún*, or home meadow, I gathered many mushrooms, which were recognized by the old farmer priest as edible. He was the only Iclander I have met with who did not look upon these delicious fungi as poisonous. At a later date when resident at *Húsavík*, I was in the habit of collecting them regularly during the season, and frying them for my breakfast. The cooking was performed in Madame Guðjohnson's kitchen, and I well remember how on the first occasion my kind hostess and her trusty old cook implored me with well-nigh maternal solicitation to desist from my purpose, and how, finding me deaf to their entreaties, they scanned me with curious and fearful eye each time I joined in the family meals, as if to mark the effect of the poison. After a week's indulgence in my favourite dish, unattended by bad results, the fears of the family began to abate (save and except those of the good old cook, who was steadfast in her prejudices), and after a while the demand for mushrooms became greater than the supply. No one would be persuaded, however, to gather for himself—and perhaps they were right.

In the evening I amused myself with a copy of Byron's *Don Juan* from the priest's library, and we turned in early in the hopes that the weather would abate and permit us to get away about 2 a.m. But we were doomed to disappointment, for on crawling out at 6.30 we found the fog thicker than ever, and the wind fallen so as to give no prospect of the mist clearing off. However, as my companions could not afford any further delay, despite the untowardness of the weather, and the utter dreariness of the path before us, we were in our saddles by 9 o'clock and, bidding adieu to our kind host SÍRA Jón (Sveinsson), we cantered off in good spirits to perform the seventy miles as the road lies which separate us from the next human habitation.

For two hours and a half our road lay almost south, through the *Mælifellsdalr* (Measure fell's dale) and along a part of the *Haukagilshéiði* (A.-S. *heafoc*; Hawk gill's heath), a vile stony track, till we reached the *Svartá*, a feeder of the *Blanda*,<sup>4</sup> and not the same we crossed two days since, which runs into the western branch of the *Héraðsvötn*. These streams are similarly named for a similar reason—the dark colour of their beds, derived from the black boggy land through which they flow. Proper names in Icelandic geography repeat themselves *ad nauseam*.

We next turned south-west, passing between the *Aðalmannsvötn* (46) (Chief's lakes), and the *Þingmannaháls* (Members of Parliament's neck), and, crossing the *Eyvindarstaðaheiði* (Eyvindrstead heath), descended upon the *Blanda*. Here followed a repetition of the scene already described when crossing the *Héraðsvötn*; we had not dared to ford the broad, deep, treacherous flood except under the guidance of the servant who had accompanied us thus far from *Mælifell*. The clock was "one quarter gone to three" by the time we reached the western shore, so we determined to give our steeds a "blow," and to partake of a little solid refreshment.

<sup>4</sup> *Blanda* is the name of a milky-looking liquid produced in the making of *skyr*, and the river derives its name from the similar appearance given to it by the immense amount of fine mud with which it is contaminated.

Meantime we had leisure to enjoy the scene around us. On all sides save southwards, the eye wandered over a brown, arid landscape, broken occasionally by isolated hills, but apparently endless; while the view south, though equally dull, weird, and lifeless, was relieved by the towering, snow-covered flanks of the *Hofsjökull*, and *Langjökull* (Long ice-mountain), parents of the muddy, sullen *Blanda*, which ran at our feet. Our guide, Einar (Einarsson) from *Mælifell*, declared that for eight years he had been in the habit of searching for strayed sheep about the sources of *Blanda*, and that he had been many times at the foot of *Hofsjökull*, and was fully assured that no increase of snow or ice had taken place on those parts of the mountain visited by him. He added that a great portion of the eastern side was composed of lava only partially covered by snow. During our halt, a huge eagle rose majestically from the river bank at some distance from us, and we watched him till he became a tiny speck, at last losing him altogether. While straining our eyes after the feathered king, one of us noticed two moving objects almost under the flank of the *Langjökull*, which we at first supposed to be lost sheep, but further observation proved them to be men on horseback. Had we put faith in popular fancies, we should have dubbed these lonely wanderers "*Útilegumenn*" (Outlaws), but we contented ourselves with the more sober supposition that they were honest farmers in quest of swans, which at this season are moulting, and easily to be caught by a good pony.

After an hour's rest, we rewarded and took leave of our excellent guide, and held on our way, skirting the northern scarp of *Sauðafell* (47) (Sheep fell), and the southern slopes of *Sandfell* (Sandfell), crossing the *Öldur* (Waves) eighteen in number, and entering fairly upon the *Stórisandr* (Stour-sand [and stone] desert). The road on the sand does great credit to the parishes which have care of it. We found it well cleared of stones, and lined on either side by boulders, so that no man could mistake his way, unless after a snowfall of more than a foot in depth.

At about two hours' ride from *Blanda* (some travellers

blandly misname it "*Blandá*"—there is no such word in the language),—we came suddenly upon a huge rift in the ground running right athwart our path for an unknown distance, eight to ten feet wide, and so deep that we could see nothing of a bottom. A small hillock near, marking the edge of the *Stórisandr*, and named *Grettishæð* (48) (Grettir's height), from the fact of the hero's head having been hidden there by his murderer, was also split in twain, the whole being the work of a recent earthquake. We were fortunate in finding a natural stone bridge over the chasm but a few paces from the road, and after no end of snorting and objection offered by the ponies, we at length persuaded them to cross by it.

An hour later we came upon a *Beinakerling* (Bone Carline), one of those curious stone pyramids whose interstices are filled with hollow horse or sheep bones. The passing traveller dismounts and scribbles a *vísa* (verse) of a scurrilous or loose kind on a scrap of paper, which he places in one of the hollow bones for the edification of the next passer by. This is evidently a relic of the *nið-stöng* (nid-post) of ancient times. *Nið* (Ulphilas, *neiþ*; Ang.-Sax. *nið*; Old High Germ. *nid*; Germ. *neid*; Dan., Swe., *nid*) = contumely, lampoon, an offence that was punishable by outlawry. Generally it consisted of a verse, but a graver kind of *nið* was the carving of a person's likeness—*tré-nið* (tree-nid)—in an obscene position on an upraised post (*nið-stöng*). When the post was erected a horse's head was also put up, and a man's head was carved on the pole's end, with dire Runes and imprecations. In popular legends, the devil always scratches his writing on a blighted horse's bone. A modern traveller speaks of these *vísur* as messages of Godspeed—he must have been thinking of the Eastern proverb, which tells that "words are made to hide our thoughts." The verses which Herra Guðjohnson and I found on the Carline were simply untranslatable.

Some distance further on are the *Biskupsvörður* (Bishop's beacons), a scatter of huge boulders, said to mark the site where some bishop of Catholic times perished on a journey across the island. The wild, weird desolation of the scene

was very striking, and I could not help wondering that no local Sir Walter Scott had tenanted it with a representative of the Black Dwarf, but probably Tradition has had enough to do to people the numerous caves in the island. These stones mark the limit of the *Arnarvatnsheiði* (49) (Erne-water heath), and the road, which had of late been very rough, greatly improved again. I am at a loss to account for the position of these boulders; the very limited area which they cover seems to forbid the supposition that ice has transported them, but transported they have been, and that too from a great distance.

We are now within a dozen miles of the *Eiríksjökull* (Eiríkur's ice mountain), and the *Balljökull* (50) which is part and parcel of the *Langjökull*. We failed to discover a sign of a glacier from either of the glistening white giants; indeed, the snow follows the outlines of the mountains so closely that I doubt its being of any considerable depth except on the broad summits. The ascent of either looked easy enough for an athletic climber, armed with pole, snowshoes, and spikes for the feet in case of ice.

Presently the dreaded fog descended, thickened, and obscured everything, and in the same pea-soup-like atmosphere we reached the camping-ground, on a peninsula which juts into the *Arnarvatn* (Erne-water), at 8.30 p.m. This is one of the largest of a cluster of lakes named the *Fiskivötn* (Fish lakes), from the abundance of trout to be found in them. The map is widely incorrect concerning their number and disposition, as it is regarding all the interior of the island. There seemed to us to be an interminable maze of them, though the fog hid the majority from view. To reach our *skáli* (Scot. *shieling*), a hut or shed for temporary use or shelter, we had to cross the *Bíðará* (51), a small stream feeding the Eagle lake. We had seen two eagles in our day's ride, and disturbed some two dozen swans on the lake.

While the handy Pétr took the ponies to pasture and hobbled them, we unfurled our little tent (the hut forbade intrusion) and prepared our simple meal. Without being able to find

an atom of anything that could be made to burn, and numbed by the chill damp air, we turned in for a well-earned nap, but the clammy coldness of our bodies chased Morpheus unrelentingly from our eyelids, and after turning restlessly from side to side, and yawning our jaws tired till 4.30 a.m., we crawled out and determined to make another start.

The ponies were caught, the tent levelled and packed up, and, without stopping to breakfast, we were under weigh again at 6.45, in the same horrid fog which had seen us go to bed. Two and a half hours' canter over an excellent road, winding among the sullen-looking pools of the *Arnarvatnshæðir* (Eagle lake hillocks), brought us to the northern bank of the *Norðlingafljót* (Northerners' flood), a clear stream, rising at the foot of the *Langjökull*, draining some of the *Fiskivötn*, and feeding the *Hvítá*. The position of this river set us speculating upon the origin of the *Fiskivötn*. Lying as they do upon an elevated desert, and many of them devoid of any visible feeder, I fancied they might be fed by subterranean soakage from the molten snows of the *jökclar* to the south of them, but the course of the *Norðlingafljót*, being exactly interposed, seems to preclude that solution of the enigma, and leaves us still in doubt.

Shortly after crossing the river we met a large party of travellers going north, and great was the torrent of question engendered. It was a strange and suggestive sight, that meeting of our caravans in the desert, reminding me forcibly of Eastern life and manners.

The weather cleared as we neared the *jökclar*, and presently we approached within a couple of miles of *Eiríksjökull*, whose here perpendicular sides, surmounted by a dome of purest white, showed no trace of glacier. Every near feature in the landscape is named after one or other of the outlaws who at one time inhabited the cave we are about to visit. It is a huge cavern in the *Hallmundarhraun* (Hallmundur's lava), named *Surtshellir* (52) (Surt's cave), a short distance only from the road. There are several entrances, and the one by which we gained admission was not the principal one;

it was difficult to find, being merely a split in the rock, expanding as it descends till a chamber is reached, some twenty feet high and thirty wide, and running no man knows how far.

Scampering over the lava and its broad fringe of grass-land, and rounding a shoulder of the *Strútr* (53) (Ostrich), we came suddenly upon a farm, nestling under a wing of the Ostrich, and rejoicing in a situation, the like of which for picturesque grandeur is not equalled in the island. *Kalmans-tunga* (54) (Kalman's tongue—of land) is a veritable oasis in the wilderness, a patch of well-watered and even forested grass-land surrounded by lava and desert, and frowned upon by towering mountains, many of which bear eternal snow almost to their very feet. Marking a pass between the mid-island peaks, more than half the roads across the country lead by it. The farmer, Stefán (Ólafsson), who is said to have lined his pockets at the expense of his guests, with even greater rapacity and audacity than has that arch-rascal Pétr at *Reykjahllð*,<sup>5</sup> has been for years at the byre, and assured me positively that no growth can be perceived in any of the *jökla* which compass his lands.

It being midday when we arrived here, we turned out the ponies for a nibble, and retired to enjoy a frugal breakfast in the newly painted guest-room. Allowing our ponies a three hours' rest, we set off again in hopes of reaching *Þíngvellir* before midnight. Crossing the *tún*, we came almost immediately upon the *Hvítá* (White water), rising at the foot of *Eiríksjökull*, becoming lower down a celebrated salmon river, and emptying into the *Borgarfjörður* (55) (Burg firth). We carefully forded its muddy waters, which are banked by great shelves of rolled stones that tell plainly of awful spring torrents. An hour's ride across the old lava-bed called *Geitland* (Goatland), which has given to the ice-capped volcano whence it came the name of *Geitlandsjökull*, brought us to the *Geitá* (Goat water), a small feeder of the *Hvítá*, which we

<sup>5</sup> Also Prof. Þaijkull says, "It was only at *Reykjahllð*, and at *Kalmanstunga*, in the western part of the country, that I was exposed to any great imposition."



passed at about six miles from its source—the snows of *Geitlandsjökull*.

Ascending then a sharp slope, we scrambled over the vile stony road of *Skúllaskerð* (Skúli's scamper), so called from one of the outlaws, who escaped his enemies by riding through this pass at the pace indicated by the word "*skerð*." This word is applied to the peculiar gait in which the Icelandic riding ponies are trained. It consists in moving both legs on the same side at the same time, just like our old-fashioned "amblers" did, and a really good horse will travel this way as fast as a galloper. Hence, with an ever-increasing storm of wind and rain in our faces, we followed the *Langihryggr* (56) (Long ridge), and entered *Kaldidalr* (57) (Cold dale). Overlooked on the one side by *Geitlandsjökull*, and on the other by the *Ok* (Ang.-Sax. *geoc*, Eng. yoke), which though not called a *jökull* is deserving of the name, at a distance of only about a mile on either hand, this dale may well be christened "cold." I was assured, however, that in bright weather the heat here is suffocating, owing to the reflection and re-reflection of the sun's rays from the snow-and-ice-covered mountain sides. Our three hours' ride through it was one of the coldest and most miserable that I remember. The wind howled about us and nearly carried us bodily out of our saddles, while it drove into our faces a pitiless storm of sleet, hail, and rain by turns. Besides numbing and half-blinding us, the tempestuous weather prevented our seeing anything of the *Hádegisfell* (High-day, i. e. midday, fell) or the *Þorishöfði* (Thori's headland) on our left, the latter keeping guard over the mystical Thori's dale in the centre of the *Geitlandsjökull*; and on the right, enshrouding the *Fanntófell* (58) (Rascal's fell), where, saith tradition, a couple of rascals met with the fate of the Kilkenny cats.

Escaping at last from the Cold dale, which is completely choked with the moraines of prehistoric glaciers, it took us an hour to ride from the celebrated *Beinakerling* (Bone-Carlina), that ushers travellers in at the southern end of the pass, over a fair road to *Brunnar* (59) (Wells), a scatter of

small lakes, whose grassy banks are a favourite camping-ground, and which we reached at 8 p.m. Become drenched to the skin, and fearing to lose our way in the fast-increasing dimness, we did not make any halt here, but tightened the girths and the pack-straps for more hard riding. Leaving the *Sælahús* (60) (Shelter-house), which exists in name only, behind us, we come in an hour to the *Tröllhóls* (61) (Troll's house), a ridge of lava which has flowed from the neighbouring, but to us invisible, fire-demon *Skjaldbreið* (Broad shield), and half an hour later we pass the *Sandklettavatn* (Sand cliffs water), and find ourselves on the *Ormavellir* (Worm fields; Ang.-Sax. *wyrm*; cp. Ormshead, overlooked by *Ármansfell* (62) (Steward's fell). Mounting another ridge, whence should have been visible on the left the *Meyjarsæti* (Maidens' seat; *mær*, Ang.-Sax. *meowle* = maid), the hill where sat the maids in heathen days, to watch the wrestling and other contests that took place near its foot, we with great difficulty found our way over the old lava-beds composing the *Hofmannasflötr*,<sup>6</sup> and descended the steep path of the *Jorukleif* (Jorun's cliff, from *að klífa*, to climb). Here we lost all trace of the track, and Herra G. galloped his splendid grey hither and thither in vain search of it. At last, allowing the sagacious and hungry animal to choose its own direction, it quickly smelt out a byre, and exactly at midnight we reached *Svartagil* (Swart gill), at the foot of *Ármansfell*, and about an hour from *Þingvellir*.

The awakened farmer showed in true Icelandic colours. The farm-house, being small, contained no guest-room, so he turned himself and his family out of bed in order to put us up in the *baðstofa* (63), or common sleeping-room. Wrapped in our reeking clothes (it was the only way to get them dried), Herra G. and I occupied one bed, while his sister had another to herself within a yard of us, and Pétr filled a moiety of a third which adjoined ours endwise. We slept off our fatigue, drew not a little of the moisture out of our clothes, and arose next morning fresh as larks and without a sign of

<sup>6</sup> "Gentry's Lea," where the hon. members of the *Alþing* used to meet.

cold or rheumatism about us. Such is Iceland's lovely clime, and such the "condition" induced by hearty out-door exercise. Leaving our kind retainer's long after midday, we got into the *Þingvellir-Reykjavík* road without passing the *Almannagjá* (All men's rift), and reached the capital in the normal juicy weather which it boasts, at about 8 p.m.

And now our journey is over, let us glance at its main features. A ride of 350 indirect miles (between the capitals), over the worst rivers and deserts visited by the ordinary tourist, accomplished in five short days' travel by an unseasoned party—including a lady—cumbered with tent and baggage; and all borne by seven ponies, who had also come from *Húsavík* to *Akureyri*. The fact that none of our ponies was either lame, galled, or shoeless at the end of the tour, and that not an atom of our *impedimenta* was in any way damaged, proves that the crowd of evils which all would have us believe to be inherent to Icelandic travel, is to be avoided. The success of a journey in Iceland depends on four considerations; firstly, the guide; secondly, the horses; thirdly, the weather; and fourthly, the traveller himself. Of our horses I may say that they were in fair condition, but only second-rate animals, save Herra G.'s grey; and of the weather and the travellers alike the less said the better; but our guide and leader, Herra Guðjohnson, was of a calibre unknown among professional guides, and to him is all the credit due—not all, however, for I must award a meed of praise to his wonderful little dog, "*Kátr*" (merry), who, for driving ponies, was equal to three well-mounted men.

## CHAPTER IV.

## HEKLA AND GEYSIR.

Might scatter fire through ice, like Hecla's flame.—*Don Juan.*

MY business finished, I found I had something like ten days on hand before I could get a steamer to convey me home. A hater of town life, especially in such a town as Reekwich, and provided already with mounts, I quickly concluded terms with a promising young scholar from the Latin school, hight Geir Zoega (Jun.), for the benefit of his company on a scamper round to *Hekla* and the *Geysir*.

Half-ten (9.30) on the morning of the 25th of August found us in the saddle. At *Lækjarbotnar* (Stream-bottoms) we fell in with three young ladies, whose acquaintance I owned, going on a visit to friends at *Eyrbakkí*, under the guidance of Einar the Drunkard. Joining company we cantered merrily over the *Svínahraun* (Swine-lava) till reaching the point where the roads diverge, one passing through the *Lágaskarð* (Low pass) to *Eyrbakkí*, the other traversing the *Hellisskarð* (Cave pass) in the direction of *Reykir* (Reek—from the hot springs near), which was to be our night's lodging. After seeing our fair companions started on the right path, Geir and I made a short diversion to the left, in order to look at the sulphur pits on *Hengill* (a beetling crag, from the root *að hengja*, to hang). The lemon-coloured mineral was not in conspicuous abundance, and we feared to expend much time in examining the *Ölkeldur* (Ale-wells), whose valuable carbonated waters have received the attention of the well-known local *savant*, Dr. Hjaltalín. Inspired by the lovely weather, we trotted over the *Baulavellir* (Cow plains)—forming a pleasing pastoral scene

in the *Hellisheiði* (Cave heath)—passed a *sælahús* (shelter-house), and rounding the shoulder of a hill, were surprised to perceive our late *compagnons de voyage* at some little distance ahead of us. At once I saw that one of us had mistaken the path, and being without compass and map, I blamed Geir's stupidity. A few yards more, however, and the steam of *Reykir* could be watched curling up in white wreaths from the green-sward, and on coming up with the cavalcade, Einar was found to be completely ignorant of his whereabouts, and wrapt in deep melancholy at the sight of the bottom of his brandy bottle.

Under such circumstances the least we could do was to see the ladies in safety to their destination. Leaving *Reykir* then at some distance to the left, we forded the *Varmá* (64) (Warm water), a rivulet draining both *Hengill* and the hot-springs of *Reykir*, of trifling size, but lying in such a swampy basin that the plunging of the ponies wetted their riders most effectually. Picking our way cautiously over the same treacherous bog, with but small opportunity for appreciating beauty of landscape, had such existed, we came to the bank of the *Ólfusá* (Ólfuss-water—a nickname), the muddy flood formed by the juncture of the *Sog* (65) (Inlet) from *Þingvöðlavatn* (Thing-plains-water) with the *Hvítá* (White water) and its three considerable feeders. At *Arnarbæli* (66) (Erne cry) we secured a ferryman, and unburdened our beasts for their long cold swim. The breadth and strength of the current made us doubt whether the ponies would consent to be driven across, and we judged it better policy to tow them behind the ferry-boat. Thus three journeys were necessary in order to transport riders, mounts, and gear, and darkness was already looming as we filed away from the river.

Every moment things got worse, of foot-path there was no trace and never a *varða* was to be seen; "from the centre all round to the sea" was naught but quaking morass. As Einar was to blame for all this, I made him lead the caravan, not that I expected him to find a shelter or the path, but I thought it just as well that he should have the first benefit of a dip in

an extra soft hole, should there be one in the way, and his stumblings would at least teach us where not to go. But the rascal was too cunning for me—a close inspection of the ground revealed the unpleasant fact that we were simply describing a circle. Presently I espied what appeared to be a building of some sort, and checked my pony to see in what direction he would turn if left to his own devices, for in Iceland much greater dependence may be placed on equine and canine sagacity than on dunder-headed *fylgi-menn*. My plan promised success, the hungry jade peered towards the scarcely discernible object, but our hopes sank lower than the temperature of our bodies, when, after united and repeated holloing, we failed to hear the faintest whisper of a house-dog's bark. Disinclined, however, to abandon what seemed our only chance of a night's lodging, we steered for the suspected building, which was found to be a turf-walled and turf-covered hay-stack. The ladies at once proposed to take shelter here till daylight, and thus in reeking garments, with hay for a bed and hay for a blanket, they passed the night, while Geir and I kept watch on the ponies, and Einar the Drunkard disappeared, whither we neither knew nor cared.

Soon after 4 a.m. it was light enough to make a new start, and two hours more of hopping from *púfa* to *púfa* brought us finally to *Eyrbakkí*. The first individual to accost us on our arrival was Einar the Drunkard! He had stumbled upon the trading-station, secured a bed, and promptly gone to sleep, without so much as referring to our condition or whereabouts. Herra Guðmundr (Þorgrimsson), the factor of this establishment, quickly did his utmost to comfort the inner and outer man, and so great was his kindness that I almost felt thankful to Einar the Drunkard for having indirectly brought me here. The outlook must be drear enough in winter—backed by square miles of swamp and faced by the raging Atlantic, which, dashing on the low islets, flings its spray completely over the house.

Long delay was inadmissible, and 10.30 found us taking leave of our generous-hearted host and his fair visitors. There

was nothing worthy of note by the way, as we followed the coast-line to *Baugstaðir* (A S., *beðg*; Ring- or armlet-stead), and then cantered over the grassy plain in the direction of of *Hestufjall* (Horse mountain). Anon we came to more bog, but found travelling good enough so long as we confined ourselves to the turf causeway on which the path was carried—one step off the track and it would be an easy matter to disappear, with the prospect of reappearing in the form of a fossil in a future coal-bed. For the sake of the ponies we spent a couple of hours at *Kampholt*, and took the opportunity of refreshing ourselves at the same time with coffee, and that most welcome dish, *skyr*. Our old host showed in true colours, and would hardly be persuaded to accept any remuneration. We were glad to avail ourselves of the guidance of a sprightly little lad over the two hours' stretch of abominable, trackless fen that still stood between us and our halting-place for the night, *Olafsvellir* (Olave's-fields), where we arrived but little before darkness had overtaken us.

The morning broke clear and fine, and we were able to enjoy a magnificent view of the three sister mountains *Hekla* (67), *Tindfjallajökull*,<sup>1</sup> and *Eyjafjallajökull*.<sup>2</sup> The first named was so free from snow that some imagined her (the name is feminine) to be preparing for yet another of the oft-repeated fiery outbursts that have made the surrounding country a howling wilderness. *Eyjafjallajökull* on the other hand had scarce a scar on its pure white surface, and even the *Tindfjallajökull*, though a dwarf compared with *Hekla*, was conspicuously snow-capped. Between these two *jöklar* lies the valley of the *Markarfljót* (68) (Marches flood), the very mention of which recalls the thrilling tragedy of local history, chronicled in that incomparable Saga, *Njála*. I longed to turn my pony's footsteps to the—can I say hallowed?—spot,<sup>3</sup> where *Njál* delved and *Bergþóra* span, to the site of noble *Gunnar's* bloody fight with thirty hired assassins under the shadow of

<sup>1</sup> Peak-mountain-jökull.

<sup>2</sup> Island-mountain-jökull.

<sup>3</sup> So gracefully called *Bergþórshvöll* (Bergthora's knoll) after his wife;—*hvöll*, mod. *höll* = a dome-shaped hill.

the *Þrithyrningr* (Three-cornered-hill), and to the *Stóra Dinnon* (69), that hid the slayers of Þrain. But with an untravelled school-boy for guide and limited time at my disposal, I must fain content myself with the half-cockney *Hekla* tour.

Rousing Geir into the nearest approach to activity of which he was capable, we got off at midday and had half an hour's swampy ride till we struck the bank of the *Þjórsá* (Bull-*Taurus*-water). A ferry should have been available here, but being, for some reason, laid up, we were compelled to follow up the river for three hours more to *Þjórsárholt*, where is another ferry-boat as well as a ford—*Nautavað* (70) (Neat-wade)—passable when the river is low. Here the flood is broad and powerful, the bed a portion of an old lava stream from *Hekla*, so old indeed that it is completely disintegrated and pasture-grown.

An easy one and a quarter hour's ride brought us to *Stóruvellir* (Stour-fields) at the seasonable hour of 6 p.m. The good old priest Síra Guðmundr (Jónsson) extended to us the generous liberality for which an Icelandic *prestr* is universally known; and the bijou bed-chamber placed at my disposal has scarce a compeer in the island. Our reverend host, too, possessed one important trait in pleasing contrast with all his countrymen—he positively understood the value of *Time!* and thus we had breakfasted sumptuously and saddled our nags ere the clock struck eight. After an hour's hand-gallop on fresh ponies hired from our host, we reached *Galtalækur* (71), and there rested an hour while the *bóndi*, who was to guide us up the volcano, was being fetched from the scene of his labours in the fields.

For want of a boy, we engaged his daughter to look after our animals, a fine buxom lass of some seventeen winters, to borrow a native expression—for instead of quoting a child's age by summers as with us, an Icelanders reckons by the tale of the winters it has survived, and so with all live stock. Sweet seventeen sprang astride of an unsaddled razor-back, and challenged the horsemanship of the best of us. De-



spite horrid sandpits in the cavernous lava, in one of which her papa came to considerable grief. Shortly we wade through the *Galtalekr*, a feeder of the *Vestri Rangá*, or *Ytri Rangá* (72) as it is called nearer the sea, which we also ford, and continue the treacherous sandy path till we reach the vitreous stone stream that flowed in 1845 and destroyed the *tún* or home meadow of the farm *Næfrholt* (73) (Birch copse) lying in the valley beneath. Here we left our chargers under the care of our chubby petticoated cavalier, and scrambled across the iron barrier, which was anything but comfortable for the feet.

As luck would have it, the wind grew momentarily fiercer, and then it began to snow, obscuring everything that was more than 100 yards distant. Crawling soon had to be substituted for walking, and so furious did the wind become that it was sometimes necessary to lie *ventre-à-terre*, and hold on with main force to avoid an undesirable roll. We kept on, in the hope that the storm might be only transitory ; but at last we were brought to confess ourselves fairly foiled, for we scarcely felt disposed to go to the top simply for the sake of saying that we had been there, and every other inducement had disappeared.

Our Maid of the Horse received us with smiles, and led the way home at a desperate pace. With sharpened appetites we did justice to some excellent smoked mutton and coffee that was put before us, and cheerfully rewarding our honest host and his winsome daughter, we scampered over the plains to *Stóruvellir* in one and a half hours.

Next day was Sunday, and I fear I showed sad want of decorum to the good *Síra Guðmundr*, and of gallantry to his pretty accomplished daughters, by leaving the house before Divine service had been performed. I trust, however, that sufficient excuse for my conduct may be found in the fact that I was at that time ignorant of the existence of any law or custom regarding the subject ; though, as I have since learnt, the law decrees that a traveller shall not leave a place under those conditions, save with the consent of the priest, disobedience of the edict entailing the penalty of a fine—a curious, and now almost

obsolete practice, that points to the power formerly wielded by the clergy.

The *Þjórsá* was ferried at the same point as before, and I noticed that the passage with an empty boat occupied the ferrymen just five minutes—five minutes of real work. I tasted the water and found it by no means bad, and, indeed, salmon are found in the river in considerable numbers, but the mud-tainted liquid is so thick that the fish are not easily taken with the fly.

Passing the farms of *Hamrar* (74) (Crag) *Hæll* (75) (Heel), *Hlíð* (Slope), and *Sólheima* (76) (Sun home), we forded the *Laxá* or *Stóra Laxá* (Great salmon water), a fine salmon stream running between banks of trachyte, but temporarily ruined by hard netting, and called at *Hruni* (Ruins), the cure of the well-informed Sira Steindor Briem, for a drink of coffee. Pushing across the *Minni Laxá* (Minor salmon water) we procured a guide at *Reykjadalskot* (Reek-dale cot) over the small, but bad, swamp to *Kópsvatn* (77) (Seal-cub water).

Off again at half-past 9 in the morning, under a sun that was all too hot for the comfort of the ponies, we were forced to halt awhile at *Skipholt* (Ship hill) that a shoe might be tightened, and were kindly invited to beguile the time by sipping coffee. Somewhat later we forded the *Hvítá* (White-water) at a *vað* (wade) known as *Steipa* (connected with to stoop or fall down), from the ease with which a false step may be taken, and the natural consequence arising from it. As it was our mounts nearly swam, and I was assured that a few yards on either side of us the current was three fathoms deep. Though a *jökull*-drain like the *Þjórsá*, this river contains much finer salmon up as far as the *Gullfoss* (Golden force) which we shall visit, and I fancy this must be principally attributed to the opportunity afforded the muddy sediment of depositing itself in the lake (*Hvítárvatn*) at the foot of the *Langjökull* (Long *jökull*) which immediately feeds the stream.

It cannot but strike the reflective reader as a remarkable fact that so few salmon fishers find their way to Iceland. I

do not hesitate to say, on the authority of friends who have tried both, that the Icelandic fish is superior to the Norwegian, and there can be no doubt that the cost of renting in the latter country is far more than it would be in the former. There is abundant accommodation to be had throughout the island, which, if not superlatively good, is not by any means dear, and the languages are so much alike that there would be no difficulty on that score. In the numbers of the *Field*, referred to in a footnote on a previous page, I have shown what sport was met with in the north of the island, and in Appendix B of this volume more information will be found concerning this and kindred subjects.

As we left the river, our guide and late host Sigurðr (Magnússon) lent me his own splendid riding pony, for which also he afterwards made a splendid charge, who though a trotter, was so easy that I imagined him to be *vakur*.<sup>4</sup> Keeping always on the river bank, we enjoyed many picturesque scenes. At *Hólmi* (Island) is a tall pillar of palagonite conglomerate standing in the midst of the roaring torrent, which here pours between the walls of a black ravine. A little to the south of this holm is the spot where a natural stone bridge spanned the river in olden times, which, according to some stories, was destroyed from mean motives by the wife of a certain Bishop of Skálholt on the western shore.

At *Brattholt* (78) (Brentholt) we waited for coffee, and secured the leadership of the *bóndi*, Tómas (Tómasson), to the fall. About twenty minutes ride from this farm the river ploughs its way through a most lovely gorge of black volcanic rock named the (?) *Pjaxa-gljúfr* (79). There was no danger in standing on the very brink, and a stone which I tossed into the surging yellow flood took five seconds in reaching the face of the water. The force was reached at three o'clock. Already I had seen snatches of scenery that quite repaid the slight

<sup>4</sup> Literally, wakeful, alert; now applied to ambling ponies. These ponies are much prized among the people, as were ambling palfreys in England in the days when our roads were little better than a modern Icelandic *vagr*, and all travel must be performed on horseback.

détour we had made, and I was more than charmed as the full grandeur of the tumbling river burst upon us. To compare it with its rival the *Dettifoss*, I should say that it is superior as regards the volume of water, but inferior on the score of depth. All the great falls of Iceland have a distinct peculiarity, they are V-shaped, that is to say the river falls from two opposite sides into a cleft of that form, the angular termination of a *gjá* or lava rift. In this instance too, as in most others, the angle is marked by an islet of basalt, which thus forms two distinct bodies of water. I roughly estimated each arm at about 100 ft. in width, the deepest of them, about 80 feet, falling into a fissure scarce ten feet wide at the bottom, and not more than fifty feet wide at the top, shaped somewhat like a funnel. Immediately above the main fall, the river descends in a series of cascades, in all perhaps forty feet in depth, and some 600 feet broad. The widest part of the river I judged to be not less than 500 yards, narrowing to about 300 as the rapids are reached. It is possible to scramble down to the level of the stream below the fall, whence a good view can be obtained, while behind one the black wall rises 150 feet sheer. From the basin that receives the fallen waters,—whose horrid black pools are said to hide giant salmon, their progress stayed for want of a ladder—the imprisoned torrent foams and plunges with maddened rage twixt towering buttresses of palagonite and basaltic lava, that frown upon it and bend over it as if longing to prevent its escape, and indeed from one point it is impossible to imagine that any but a subterranean exit can exist, so closely do the black walls approach each other.

There are many grim, grand beauties in the foss itself, but these are far surpassed by the landscape northwards. In the foreground is the wild barren waste which forms the basin of the river, backed by the *Bláfell* (Blue fell) a bulky looking fellow with steep sides and flattish top, behind which we know lies the glacier-fed and floe-covered *Hvítárvatn* whence issues the river, a matured and muddy flood. Beyond, on the one hand, the snow-fields of the *Langjökull* tower in pristine

whiteness, relieved by the sharp peaks of the *Fárlhettur* (Earl's hoods), rising from their base, while to the right or eastwards we can see the *Kerlingaffjöll* (Carlines' mountains) marking a scatter of hot springs, and overtopping them are the spurs of the *Blágnjúpjökull* (Blue peak jökull), forming part of the *Hofs-* or *Arnarfellsjökull*, the icy giant that guards two of the mid-island paths, the *Sprengisandr* and the *Vatnahjallavegr* (Water ledge way) or *Kjalvegr* (Keel [shaped ridge] way) as it is also called. The latter route is very rarely followed, though possessing, as I am assured, many advantages over the former in respect of pasture by the way, and fewer river difficulties, and nothing inferior to it in the matter of scenery. Metcalfe is the only tourist who has crossed the island by this track, and I must refer the reader to his volume<sup>5</sup> for the little information published concerning it.

Two hours of fair riding over a villainous bog and across three arms of the *Túngufljót* (Tongue [= delta] flood), a second drain of the *Langjökull*, carried us to *Haukadalr* (Hawk dale) where we only halted to borrow the dollar-bringing spade that is used for feeding the *Strokkur* (Churn) with turf emetics, and pushed on at once to the scene of action.

Remembering *Geysir's* (80) sulky disposition, and perhaps a little spoiled by visions of the Yellowstone region of America, and similar phenomena in New Zealand, I had no intention of spending an hour in waiting for an eruption, and, having put our ponies to graze, we cut a dozen turf pills for the Churn, and sat down to a little cold collation while they were taking effect. Presently he favoured us with a triple vomit, whose height and grandeur I forbear to allude to, in dread that I might ruin the reputation of the veteran, and conscious of incapacity to extol what, with all shame be it said, I failed to admire. Leaving every visitor to form his own opinion on the beauty of the Spouter, and its *entourage*, and with a word of advice to the Reykjavík-ites to build no walls round its mouth, lest they hasten rather than postpone

<sup>5</sup> "The Oxonian in Iceland." London: Hotten, Piccadilly.

the death of their fast-decaying deity, we jump again into our saddles and pull rein at *Múli* (Mull).

The last day of August was piping hot. One and a half hour's canter brought us to the *Brúard* (Bridge water), a shallow stream perhaps seventy yards wide, deriving its name most probably from some rock that spanned the stream in the early days of Iceland's history, and certainly not from the wooden structure that now bridges its deepest part. A good but exaggerating view of it is given in Commander Forbes' charming journal,<sup>6</sup> which should find a place in every tourist's portmanteau, and will afford more amusement and a thousand times more information than all the trashy novels with which the intelligent Briton usually burdens himself in his walks abroad.

At *Laugardalr* I had the pleasure of meeting with some of my countrymen, who had lately arrived and were on their way to *Geysir*. My praise of that excellent dish, *skyr* (81), was sown on stony ground, they universally voted it horrible, and thus also the majority of those who taste it for the first time. Like stockfish, *hðkarl* and *vakr* ponies, its virtues do not become immediately apparent. The farm of *Laugadalr* (82) (Bath dale) stands on the edge of the lake of the same generic name, a small unattractive water, the resort of numbers of wildfowl, and whose borders are the birth-place of myriads of midges.

Leaving *Laugardalr* by a fairly good path, we presently strike the *Lýngdalsheiði* (83) and finally come upon the field of lava from *Skjaldbreið* (Broad-shield), in which are the *Hrafnagjá* and *Almannagjá*. The origin of these two geos or rifts in the lava has given rise to so many ingenious speculations that to propose yet another must almost amount to a sin against the patient reader, but a very simple explanation of the phenomena appears to have been overlooked. One class of theorists opine that after the stream of molten stone had commenced to solidify on the surface, the still liquid mass beneath found

<sup>6</sup> "Iceland: its Volcanoes, Geysirs, and Glaciers." London: Murray.

an outlet towards the lake (*Þingvallavatn* : Thing-fields-water), and that the upper crust descended the moment this support was removed, the *gjá* at either edge marking the limit of the dell thus formed. Did we find no signs of similar though lesser *gjár* in the bed of this dell, such a view might be accepted as being as probable as any, but I cannot imagine that the constantly recurring and well-developed rifts that are to be found in even the lowest part of the dell could have escaped closure owing to the contraction generated in the descent, if such descent took place subsequently to the cooling of the flood ; and would it not rather seem that a valley, of which the bed of the lake is only a continuation, already existed before the lava flowed, and the viscous fluid overlapping the borders of the vale split asunder on the angle under the shrinking influence of solidification ?

But a truce to theory. Let us rather admire the effect than ponder o'er the cause. The *Hrafnagjá* (Raven-geo) has not the proportions of its companion, but its picturesqueness is of no mean order, and the cruel black chasms that yawn on each side the path invite a second peep into their recesses.

Drawing rein at *Þingvellir* (84) on the shores of the lake, we inquire for quarters, and the house being full of guests, we are promoted to the lumber-loft in the church. Here, in fancied security, I proceeded to change my nether garments, which were wet and travel-stained. I had barely commenced my toilette, having only advanced so far as to have each leg in a different pair of never-mentionables, when the church door opened and a patter of feminine feet was heard on the ladder. I made desperate efforts, but they were unavailing, I was doomed to be caught, not in a trouserless condition it is true, but infinitely worse, for in that case my position would have become instantly visible in the feeble evening light, and my abashed disturbers would have retired in haste if not in dismay, but a trouser appearing on each leg, even though they did not form integral parts of the same modest garment, allayed suspicions, and there is no knowing how long I might have been destined to maintain a sober face and conversation

amid awful suspense and convulsive clutches at threatening gapes, had not the more mischievous of the two pretty faces glanced behind me and then discovered,—oh! reader,—that my shirt hung gracefully out! She whispered to her companion, who also surveyed the weak point, and in unruffled tones they announced their intention of departing to bring me some washing water and a comb. Since that terrible moment I have always taken care to get quite free of one pair of continuations before committing a leg to a second pair.

After a frugal supper I made myself a hammock out of a boat's sail that cumbered the loft, and fell asleep as soon as the laughter of a merry party of Danes, who occupied the chancel and side aisles below, would admit.

The following morning was devoted to the classic scenes and sites that surround the *tún*.

First of all our attention was called to the stone opposite the church door, on which the credulous may see engraved the measure of a true ell, the standard for comparison in the olden days, when men, matrons, and maidens gathered by hundreds at the Thing or Parliament, their minds intent on law-suit, barter, or match-making.

In misty weather, that increased the common-place character of the landscape, we wended our way to the *Lögberg* (Law rock), where judgments were given in the rough and ready manner of the times, and to the brook *Öxará* (Axe water) in the neighbourhood. No man possessing a trace of poetic fancy or a flicker of love for bygone history can look unmoved on these scenes, provided his memory and imagination are equal to the occasion. The Saga-student who wishes to retain a *grand* impression,—the impression that creeps over him as he imbibes ideas from the stirring tales of tragedy and woe,—had better content himself with reading, and not rush to realize the natural majesty of the spot that forms the centre of Iceland's history, or he will surely be disappointed. I could not help expressing a regret that the judgment-seat of the old pagan law-givers had been chosen with so little regard to natural scenic effect, and that writers of undoubted sanity,



and even travelled and talented writers, should be prone to exaggerate its wonders with a finish that puts Americanisms far into the shade. What shall be the thoughts of the author who represents the *Nikólsagjá* as a chasm some seventy feet in depth, when he knows that a few years since a young English lady dived into the placid water at the bottom, and made her a bath in the "bottomless pit!" I deem it an injustice to the many native scenes that are really eminently grand to class with them the phenomena of the Thingfield, which, apart from its history, has not an interesting feature.

Escaping not unscathed from the hands of Prófastr Síra Símon Beck, we saddled up at 9.30, crossed the *Öxará*, and climbed the *Almannagjá*, the "yawning abyss" up and down which some of the best native ponies would *skerða*. I should clearly be guilty of vamping did I add another to the already too long list of descriptions of this by no means extraordinary—for Iceland—lava split: suffice it to say that I failed to see any necessity for having recourse to the "subsidence" theory to account for the formation.

In pouring rain we cantered over the *Mosfellsheiði* (Moss fell heath), reaching the halfway camping-ground in the *Seljadalur* (Seal dale) at about 1, and young Reekie (85) at 5 p.m., the road leading always over *heiði*, save at a small boggy patch, where it lies in the bottom of the stream that threads and drains the morass. And thus ended the tour which, but for my respect for the sensibility of a certain Reviewer, I should call Cockney, perhaps he will permit me to dub it Cooky, as a compromise.

There followed a week of enforced idleness, while waiting for the departure of the steamer that was to convey me back to British shores. "Town life" for such a length of time would scarcely have been bearable were it not for the delightful and instructive company of my genial friend Dr. Hjaltalín. The good old doctor is energetic in his endeavours to popularize the mineral waters of *Hengill*, and he is pregnant with the idea of forming a small Sanatorium on the hill some 1500 feet above sea-level. Chalybeate, carbonated, sulphurous, and

silicious springs are all said to exist within a small radius. We wish every success to the patriotic labourer and his commendable scheme.

Stray hours were filled up by paying visits in the small but cheerful social circle, and in reading English with Professor G. M. of the Latin School, and so time sped till the "Queen" had embarked her fragrant cargo of ponies, and the terrors of sea-sickness and Scotch cooking were exchanged for glorious, appetising scampers on horseback, and the frugal yet deliciously wholesome fare of *skyr*, fresh fish, and a few simple extras.

## CHAPTER V.

## SPRING FEATURES: UP THE WHALE-FIRTH.

Á þann himinháa Glym  
 Hver sem skimar lengi  
 Fær í limu sundla og svim,  
 Sem á rimum hengi.

Botns af háu brúnum fláu  
 Breytinn þrymr  
 Vatni bláu fleytir fimr  
 Fossinn sá er heitir Glymr.

THE first week of summer, according to Icelandic chronometry, had still half its course to run when (April 25, 1876) I found myself once more ploughing the Firth of Forth. Our good ship, hight "Arcturus," 322 tons register and eighty horse power, was commanded by Captain Ambrosen, a Dane, whose pleasant geniality kept pace with his sailor-like ability. The vessel had originally been built as a gunboat for the late lamented Victor Emanuel, but, not meeting with his approval, was sold by auction, and bought and refitted by the company in whose service she now runs between Copenhagen, Scotland, Færoe, and Iceland. And thus His Majesty of Denmark's mailboats of the present day follow almost identically the line pursued by Iceland's earliest colonists, those valiant pilgrims who sought security from the tyranny of Harold Harfager.

This was the second trip of the season. It had been my intention to sail by the first steamer some six weeks earlier, but I had been unable to make due preparation—and indeed, I had small cause to regret that it was so, considering what subsequently transpired. Some time in February notice had been issued that Lerwick would be the future port of call instead of

Leith or Granton, as in the past, the object of the change being presumably to shorten the voyage. The mail was accordingly despatched in advance to Lerwick, and passengers, had there been any, would also have necessarily made the preliminary sail to the capital of Shetland. In this there was nothing to complain of, quite the contrary. For my own part I should have welcomed the opportunity of visiting the very interesting archipelago, the more so as a stepping-stone to Iceland. It was here especially that the old Norse sea-kings halted on their western voyages in search of a new home. Here many remained, and built dwellings and gave pure old Norse names to every salient feature of the landscape, names on which a thousand years have had so little corruptible effect that in Iceland alone can we find their rivals for unsullied purity. What feelings would not have been created by visiting the scenes where the inimitable Sir Walter Scott laid his story of the "The Pirate;" how vivid the realizations of the life and surroundings of the old Udaller at Burgh Westra (Icelandic, *Vestri-borg*, Western burg), and of the eccentric tenant of Jarlshof (Icelandic, *Ǫárlshof*, Earl's Court). Even the names of persons occurring in the tale are Norse; Swertha would be called *Svarta* (Black) in Icelandic, a reminder that nicknames are no modern growth; while Sweyn Erickson (Icelandic, *Sveinn [Eiríksson]*) is a name common in Iceland to this hour; and further, the drink *bland* is nought but the *blanda* of Ultima Thule, which I have often drunk, and the expression *jarto*, which the great novelist translates "my dear," is assuredly the Icelandic *hjarta* (heart), with scarcely an appreciable difference of pronunciation, the latter remaining still in everyday usage, one of the many indications of the poetic effusiveness—almost Eastern in degree—of the old Norse language.

I am conscious of already too wide a digression, and ask to be borne with only while I note the remarkable tenacity with which these sea-rovers and their descendants have clung to the liquid element for a livelihood. Stout Magnus Troil rejoiced in having his house "situated on the side of an inland

voe (Icelandic, *vogr*, a bay), that brings the herrings up to your door ;" the earliest settlers in Iceland built their huts by the sea that brought them such shoals of cod and haddock ; it has been proved that the companions of the bold Red Erik, who colonized Greenland from Iceland, with wonderful sagacity chose the firths where fish came most abundantly and seals were most plentiful ; and lastly, the modern Icelanders who have emigrated in recent years to the land which but lately owned as viceroy the noble author of a most charming volume, in part relating to the island of their birth, have shown a marked predilection for the lake districts, where they might fish, as was their wont at home, though under modified conditions.

But of the steamer that was to call at Lerwick. An Edinbro' friend wrote me on the 12th March, that instead of calling at Lerwick she arrived at Granton some three days late, and sailed direct for Færoe. Thus the mail bags which went to Lerwick remained there till the Danish gunboat "Fylla" picked them up on her way to the Icelandic fishing-grounds, which she annually visits, and landed them safely at *Reykjavik*, about six weeks late in a four days' voyage ! This sort of thing goes on, more or less, at the opening of every season, but by May or June some degree of regularity is established, and the summer visitor need have no fears beyond a certain, or rather, uncertain, amount of unpunctuality, an early lesson that deserves careful learning, or the tourist will find his stock of patience sadly inadequate to the demand that exists for that virtue in these latitudes.

Three days' very easy steaming in almost constant fog brought us to *Thorshavn* (Thor's haven), the capital of the *Færoe* (Sheep isles). The definition haven is little more than complimentary. The town or fishing village lies in a small indentation of the southern coast of *Stromoe* (Stream island), and is faced seawards by the island of *Nalsoe* (Needle isle), so named from its shape and the small eye which the sea has fretted in the rocks at its larger end. This disposition of the precipitous land produces a funnel through which the winds

howl continuously, irrespective of the weather that prevails outside.

Hereabout the scenery is of a very mild order, and the shortness of our sojourn gave no time for boat-trips to the picturesque portions of the rocky coast, nor for a land excursion to the ruined monastery of *Kirkjubæ* (Church farm, *lit.* Kirkby). We rowed ashore, however, to have a look at the capital.

The first thing that strikes the stranger is that no house faces the same way as its neighbours, nor is built upon the same level. The streets or alleys, intended solely for pedestrians, run hither and thither, now uphill, now down, often steep enough to be called stairs, and so narrow that no one inclined to obesity could make his way through them, which, from a Darwinian point of view, is quite sufficient to account for the fact that not a fat individual is to be found among the population. Fish offal, which was visibly present everywhere, increased the difficulties of perambulation not a little, and our olfactory nerves reminded us that sanitary measures are as little studied here as in some places nearer home; but fish-oil lamps at the angles of the wooden huts were a pleasing feature, and one whose necessity must be patent enough in winter, when darkness and frost add their quota to existing disagreeables.

After enjoying an excellent dinner of fresh fish at the comfortable inn, we borrowed the key of the public library and ransacked its fairly numerous shelves. It was evident that all was considered fish that came to net; nothing printed had been refused, from classics down to cabin novels; there was something for all sorts and conditions of men. Göthe and Gil Blas blushed beside "Mercenary Marriage;" Pindar and Barnaby Rudge were jostled by "The Married Libertine." Moreover the damp climate of these islands was treating all alike, and a short time will suffice to complete the destruction of every volume. Scattered about in odd corners, as valueless rubbish, were a few of the barbarous old wooden ornaments from ruined *Kirkjubæ*.

Time permitting, we scrambled up sundry slippery paths to the unpretentious fort that overlooks the hamlet. Built principally as a defence against British pirates, who had learnt their profession from the ancestors of the Færoese themselves and now practised what they knew on the descendants of their tutors, its four ancient guns look highly dangerous—to the gunners, and it is to be hoped they may never have occasion even to fire a salute. But the guard-room serves for a jail, and still affords free quarters to an occasional miscreant Briton, such as the captain of a Grimsby fisherman, who lately committed assault and battery on the local sheriff, and very nearly proved too much for guard and guard-room alike.

In the small hours succeeding noon we bade adieu to the Sheep Islands, which scarcely maintain now the character implied in their name, and shaped our course for the *Vestmannaeyjar* (Westmen's islands). As night drew on the air became piercingly cold, and there was a villainous fog away to the north that was feared to be the herald of pack-ice, and reminded us unpleasantly of the brave little schooner we saw at Thorshavn, with scarcely a whole plank remaining in her, from battling with the ice off the north-east coast of Iceland. The ice-question was not of immediate importance, however, as there was no likelihood of the drift reaching so far south as our latitude, and we turned in for the night without any misgiving for the morrow. But about half-past one in the morning we were aroused by a confusion of voices in the cabin, a clattering of anything but slippered feet on the deck, and the sudden silence of the bumping, rattling, wheezing old propeller. Jumping out of our berths, we learnt that one of the engineers, in his addiction to literary pursuits, had quite forgotten the necessity for keeping the boilers supplied with water, and consequently that we might prepare for an aerial excursion and a sea-bath at any moment. Almost immediately a great rush and hissing in the boiler-room told us that the danger was past, that the boiler-tubes had melted, permitting the escape of the steam and extinguishing the fires at the same time.

For fourteen mortal hours had we to lie-to in mid-ocean, absolutely at the mercy of wind and waves, while new tubes were put into the boilers. Heavily laden, quite out of the beaten track of vessels, and not able to keep our ship's head to the sea, we rolled listlessly about, doomed to a certain drowning had the breeze only reached half the force with which it commonly rages at this season. During our lie-to we had a fine opportunity for observing the force and direction of the currents between Iceland and Færoe, and, as bearing upon the theory of the "ocean river," it was interesting to note that during the fourteen hours we made thirty-two miles of northing; and, though there was but little wind, that little came from the north. Of the strength and tendency of the current, therefore, at that season, no doubt could exist, but with reference to its temperature, we had no means of making any reliable test.

On the afternoon of the seventh day from Granton we caught a distant glimpse of the *Vestmannaeyjar* to the north, looking like a second Stonehenge standing in the sea. There is no excuse for repeating the story of the Irish bondmen, who gave the islands their name. We flattered ourselves upon distinguishing the summit of a *jökull* up among the clouds, but low-lying fog confined our view, and we had to content ourselves with watching the curious antics of guillemots and puffins, the battles between the gulls and their arch-enemy the hawk-like skua, and the heavy, clumsy flight of a few gannets, till night again drove us into the odoriferous cabin.

We turned out next morning to find ourselves already in the *Faxafjörður* (Mane firth: *Fax* [Ang.-Sax. *feax*] = a mane; *faxi*, joined with a qualifying prefix, often occurs as the name of a horse), and we very quickly turned in again to put on extra coats. What an outlook! The north wind howled and screamed through the rigging, and the hail pierced our faces as we peered from behind smoke-funnels and awnings at the desolate, snow-clad landscape. Already it filled me with misgivings for the transport of some 30 cwts. of *impedimenta*



from one corner of the island to the opposite—a good fortnight's journey.

The pilot presently boarded us, and we soon made a closer acquaintance with *terra firma*. The catering public had not expected such early visitors, and thus we had to search the fishing village, *Reykjavík*, from end to end ere we found quarters. Throwing in my lot with Mr. Kr., the Canadian emigration agent, an American subject born in Denmark, we engaged a couple of sleeping-rooms with makeshift beds at Herra Eymundsson's, the photographer, and every meal necessitated a walk through the muddy lanes to and from the well-known inn kept by Madame Jorgensen.

I was met, by arrangement, by Páll (Pálsson), whom I have already mentioned as the leader of Mr. Watts's *Vatnajökull* expeditions. He had already provided three riding ponies for our journey, which he had taken care should be fed during the winter, but it had never occurred to him that I should want to drag a ton and a half of luggage with me, and he had wisely limited the number of mounts to what he thought would be absolutely necessary, well-knowing that the prices current of these quadrupeds is about a hundred per cent. higher in *Reykjavík* than anywhere else in the island. We were assured that no animals were offering in the capital, and indeed the few we saw in the lanes and gutters were the veriest objects of pity. Starved to such a degree that they could scarcely carry their own weight, and with hair reaching almost to the ground, they looked like huge shaggy dogs, and appeared to be driven to scavenging around the dwellings in order to eke out a miserable existence.

Rumour was busy concerning the drift ice, of whose presence we had already seen a proof. One story told that the belt had encircled the northern coast and descended so far south that a trader had been nipped in its cold embrace off *Íngólfs höfði* (Ingolfr's head), on the extreme south-east coast. The great extent of the field thus indicated and the lateness of its visit filled men with the gravest suspicions, and their memories reverted to those hapless times when the

island has been completely surrounded, bringing death to many and ruin to all. Another report said that since March supplies had been running short in *Akureyri*, and, had I taken the advice so freely given by those who knew least of the subject, I should have loaded myself with provisions for the way and my ponies with commodities, out of which, I was assured, a fortune could be realized in the north.

Reducing my baggage to the slenderest proportions, I found that with any number of pack-horses less than five I could not move, and I could neither buy, beg, borrow, nor steal that number in *Reykjavík*.

At this season of the year no thought could be entertained of crossing the island by the *Stórisandr* route, as described in Chapter III., for that is purely a summer track, available only when the central deserts are free from snow and a nibble of grass is to be found at the camping-grounds. The path to be taken in winter, spring, and autumn, has a more westerly tendency, and passes over the *Holtavörðuhéiði* (Holt beacon heath), which gives it its name.

Finding it impossible to get sufficient horses, I told Páll to take round those we had to *Saurbær* (Swampy farm, *lit.* Mud-by) in the *Hvalfjarðarströnd* (Whale firth strand), and to beat up all suitable animals on his way, meeting me on a certain day at the appointed farm, whither I intended going by sea with the loads. Mr. Kr. at once volunteered to join me, and at the last moment two of the mail-carriers decided to be of our party, bringing the mail-boxes with them, and thus relieving their animals (who were sent round under charge of a boy and a couple of dogs) of several very heavy days' work. True they were transgressing a rule that forbids the mails to be taken over an arm of the sea—in case of wreck,—but knowing their own value and the scarcity of men fitted for the task, they were undeterred by the presence of the post-master himself, who came to bid us adieu at the jetty.

On the 11th May we set out. The embarkation was followed by no silent prayer as in the days of Henderson,

but rather by potent draughts from the brandy bottle and no less hearty pulls at the snuff-horn.

The fickle wind served us for a time, then fell to a dead calm. As nobody felt inclined to *row* to *Saurbær*, we determined to pull to land at *Kjalarnes* (Keel ness). Even this distance would have occupied a whole day by land, as the wide-renowned salmon stream near *Reykjavík* was well-nigh impassable for laden ponies. Disembarking on the sandy beach, we floundered through the adjacent swamp to a small farm hight *Lykkja* (=an enclosed field), lying at the foot of *Esja* (= a kind of clay, common about this mountain), the picturesque mountain facing the fishy capital, where limestone quarries have lately been opened.

The traveller at this season should be more disposed to be thankful that he has got one stage forward, than grumble if the prospect then appear worse than before. In this mood we did justice to the coffee that was placed before us, and showed every disposition to spend the night with our host if need be. Presently, however, a certain Ólafur (Gunnarsson), who had come to *Lykkja* for the fishing, proposed to rob us of 6 *kr.* (6s. 9d.) for himself and 2 *kr.* additional for each horse, for the seven hours' ride to *Reynivellir*. Like true Britons we submitted to the robbery, arranged for a boat to take our things to *Saurbær* in due course, mounted our sorry jades, and filed away from *Lykkja* at two in the afternoon.

We begin to realize the contrast between July and early May. The thaw has converted every path into a knee-deep stony bog, the floods of water from melted snows have increased the rivers fourfold, the new grass has not yet made its appearance, and the winter stock of hay is almost exhausted. As to creature comforts, fresh fish, *skyr*, fresh mutton, eider eggs, and salmon are luxuries not now to be dreamed of, and of the winter's store of rye bread, stockfish and smoked mutton, naught remains but crumbs and skinny shreds, which the good housewife shakes out of an old stocking with many a sigh, while the hungry-looking bairns eagerly inquire what manner of men can these be that such dainties be laid before

them. Even the much-praised coffee tastes poor without milk and sugar, and will rapidly deteriorate now that the people have learned to adulterate it with chicory.

On the other hand we enjoy many of nature's charms that the July traveller does not see. The birds are now nesting and delight us with their song. The mild summer-like air is filled with the plaints of the plover, the gurgling of the whimbrel, the thrush-like song of the redwing, the twitter of the wheatear, and the sweet note of the meadow pipit—the skylark of Iceland; while the hoarse croak of Krummi the Raven resounds from every crag, and the eye vainly endeavours to follow the flight of numbers of snipe, the rapid motion of whose wings produces a most musical wh-i-r-r. The flowers hardly dare to peep out as yet, and not a blade of green grass is to be seen anywhere.

In the evening we unsaddled at *Reynivellir* (Rowan fields) and were heartily welcomed by my good and learned friend, Síra Þórvaldr (Bjarnarsson). The scholarly reverend is an age in advance of his countrymen in matters of agriculture, having drained the greater part of his grass-land and recognized the fact that the compost from the sheep-pens may be used for better purposes than fuel. In a country like Iceland a man may be much better judged by his library than by his companions, for the latter cannot be of his own choosing, while the former assuredly will be. Here, in a small collection, I noticed Macaulay's History and Essays, Rawlinson's Herodotus, and many similar works. The influence of an aged mother keeps him to his native isle, where there is so little scope for an active mind, and where books are luxuries attainable only by the rich.

Our intended route had included an ascent of *Esja*, but finding our time would not allow us to attempt both it and the *Súlur* (A.-S. *sýl*: the Pillars) we decided in favour of the latter, especially as with favourable conditions of weather we might get a glimpse of the *Húnaflói* (Young bear flood) on the northern coast, and perhaps be able to see the state of the ice.

Making all too late a start at 11.30, we retraced part of

yesterday's path to *Háls* (Hause), and, taking boat, sailed out into the *Hvalfjörður* (Whale firth), around the promontory of the *Reynivallaháls* (Rowan fields house), and put into the little bay of *Hvammsvík* (Coomb wick).

Landing, we roamed about the lower spurs of the house and photographed a curious tulip-shaped rock called the *Alfastóll* (86) (Elves' stool), formed of subcolumnar basalt above (the flower) and amygdaloidal below (the stem). The action of frost and rain on the softer portion had evidently produced the effect, and in a few years, probably, the stool will be no more.

Presently we were rejoined by Síra Þórvaldr, whom duty had called to visit a parishioner lying ill of typhoid fever. Scarcely does the warm weather make its appearance than malignant fevers spread throughout the island, commencing always in the south. It is characteristic of the people that they renounce the idea of any sickness being generated within their own country, and declare these fevers to be brought from abroad, pointing to the facts, that they are always first manifested in the neighbourhood of *Reykjavík*, and at about the season when foreign vessels begin to arrive, for confirmation of the theory. But I have not the least doubt that there exists here, in a minor degree, the same cause which compels the Greenlander to have two residences, a house for winter and a tent for summer. There the accumulation of filth within and without the residence during the cold season, unnoticed while frost and snow prevent decomposition, becomes so offensive under a warm sun that no ordinary opening of windows and sprinkling of disinfectants avails anything, but, "on leaving the houses," before the snow melts, "their roofs have to be taken down, so as to let them be aired and washed by the rain, before they are rebuilt in autumn."<sup>1</sup> In Iceland, if a domestic office exist at all, its door is either hingeless or left unfastened, and it thus becomes speedily choked with snow. The winter sheep-pen, generally

<sup>1</sup> "Danish Greenland: its People and its Products," By Dr. H. Rink. (King and Co., 1877). P. 178.

under the same roof with the human dwelling, is now made to serve every purpose, with a result that I need not enlarge upon. Yet the modern Icclander, who avoids water more cautiously than does Puss herself, ascribes all his ailments to a foreign source.

We returned to *Hvammsvík* for a modest supper of stock-fish, and spent an hour geologizing on the "head," finding trivial veins of that valuable and rare mineral Iceland spar, and thin leads of iron pyrites, which may contain gold. Launching our frail skiff once more, we enjoyed the *dolce far niente* while the boatmen rowed up the firth to the head of the *Brynjudalsvogr* (A.-S. *burn* :—Body-armour-dale-bay). Floundering through about three miles of swamp we awoke the inmates of *Ingunnarstaðir* (Ingunnur's stead) and slept soundly despite the empty stomachs which a late arrival often entails in Iceland.

A hearty breakfast, in which oatmeal porridge and sour *skyr* figured conspicuously, formed none t̄o solid a foundation for the journey before us—the ascent of the *Súlur*. We availed ourselves of some animals, having the name but not much of the nature of horses, for the preliminary one and a half hours' travel (at a walking pace) to the feet of the Pillars, where we left our nags tied head to tail in a circle. The first part of the climb was anything but light, for the frost had been thawed out of the ground to a depth of about a foot, leaving a legacy of sucking wet sandy soil, plentifully studded with stones, into which we sank at every step. This improved as we got higher, to the regions where the frost still held its own, and the topmost 300 to 400 feet were still enshrouded in snow, in places hard and reliable, elsewhere soft and yielding. The view from the summit was disappointing, as clouds were settled low down on the distant hills, and the prospect was limited to *Baula* (the Cow), *Ok*, *Geitlandsjökull*, and *Esja*, though in fair weather the eye may embrace in one sweep from this pinnacle not only the *Hrútafjörðr* (Ram firth) in the north, but *Snæfellsjökull* in the west, and the *Vestman-næyjar* in the east. Concerning what little I could observe

of the geology of the peaks, I may mention that I found basaltic lava protruding at the extreme summit, while a small patch of palagonite conglomerate was noticed at about three-fourths of the way up one flank. This latter was troublesome to walk on, as the incline of the strata corresponded almost exactly with the degree of the slope of the mountain side, suggesting a doubt as to the correctness of the modern theory of the origin of this curious formation, and leading to the conclusion that the matters were erupted subaërially rather than subaqueously.

The day being still young, I proposed a walk across the valley to the fall known as *Glymr* (= a clash or splashing, especially of the waves). Only Sira Þ. volunteered to join me. Bidding our lazy companions adieu, we started off at a brisk pace across the *Botnsheiði* (Bottom heath). Soon the walking became desperately bad, owing to the excessive softness of the ground, and where my partner, in sealskin shoes, sank to the ankle, I, in boots, plunged to the knee. Then too, at every hundred yards, our path was crossed by a villainous little *gil*, too wide to be jumped and yet so narrow and precipitous as to cause much tiresome climbing. But our goal was gained at last, and our toil forgotten in the beauty of the scene.

The *Botnsá* (Bottom water) is a small stream taking its rise in the *Hvalvatn* (Whale water) at the foot of *Hvalfell* (Whale fell). In order to reach the sea it leaps into a chasm some 1200 to 1500 feet in depth, and so narrow that daylight scarce reaches to the bottom ; yet so sheer is the fall, so clean the split of the earth, that by long and attentive peering a tiny thread of silver may be seen winding along at the bottom of the cañon.

Though the fall is insignificant as far as the body of water is concerned, the depth of the plunge atones for it in a great measure, and the bird's-eye view of the firth from this spot is really charming.

The two verses which I have put at the head of this chap-

ter show what a modern Icelandic poet thinks of the fall. They may be literally translated :—

*Whoso looketh long on heaven-high Glymr gets in his limbs a swimming and giddiness, as if he were hanging on a ladder.*

*From the high brink of the Botn thunders changeable and nimbly floats the blue water—that fall is hight Glymr.*

But what whale was this that has given his name to the firth, the fell, and the lake ? 'Twas Redhead the man-whale. That the legend concerning him is soon told, and aptly illustrates the manner in which very many places in Iceland have come to bear their names, is my excuse for dragging it thus into my volume.

In the south-western extremity of Iceland the map shows a promontory called *Rosmhvalanes* (87) (Walrus ness), on the western shore of which stands a cluster of farms—*Hvalsnes* (Whale ness). The inhabitants used to repair every summer to the *Geirfuglasker* (Gare-fowl skerries), to collect sea-fowl and their eggs, still a common practice on all parts of the coast. The voyage to these skerries in an open boat is full of danger and it behoves no man to tarry when a fair wind and sea offer, and thus it came to pass, that on one such voyage, a young man was abandoned upon the rocks, as his companions would have risked all their lives had they waited for him. Next summer, when they revisited the spot, whom should they meet but their comrade, whom they supposed was long since dead of cold and hunger ; but, question him as they would, they could learn nothing of how he had maintained life under such conditions, and, having restored him to his friends, the adventure was in time forgotten.

Some time afterwards, when a large congregation had assembled at the church of *Hvalsnes*, a child in a cradle was found mysteriously deposited in the porch. All looked at it and all denied it, the hero of the skerries even more vehemently than the rest. Hereupon an Elfín woman appeared amongst them, snatched up the child and disappeared, first denouncing the youth—"But, thou, faithless coward, disowner



of thy child, shalt become a whale, the fiercest and most dreaded in the whole wide sea!"

At this the young man, whose existence on the skerries is no longer a mystery, went mad, and rushed across the promontory a good six miles, in order to throw himself into the sea from the *Hólmsberg*, where the coast is most precipitous. In this he succeeded, and was at once turned into a whale with a red head, thanks to the red cap he had been wearing.

After wreaking much mischief in the *Faxaffjörðr*, he took up his abode in the *Hvalfjörðr*, where he drowned the two sons of the priest of *Saurbær*. The latter being well skilled in the Black art, apparently a very common clerical accomplishment of that day, revenged himself by enticing the whale to the head of the firth, and up the rivulet that would scarcely float a canoe, till he reached the *Glymr* fall before mentioned. One would have thought that the story might end there, but no, the whale takes the fall at one bound and dies from exhaustion in the lake, an awful example to succeeding generations of amorous birdcatchers.

To resume the thread of our travel. Noticing that the troublesome gills were peculiar to that side of the river where we were, it was suggested that we should descend to the level of the stream, ford it and follow its course on the opposite bank, then recross it much further down, and take a bee line over the hause to *Ingunnarstaðir*. We proceeded to carry out the programme, and safely reached the stream after an hour's difficult climbing down-hill.

A nearer view of the torrent, which at midsummer is probably all but dried up, made us regret our decision, and warned us to act with caution in crossing it. Grasping each other by the arm for mutual support, we walked deliberately into the foaming, furious little rapid. The first step took us knee-deep, at the second the water seethed up to our belts. In a moment a heavy stone was rolled over on my foot and sprained my ankle, rendering me lame, so that the current was within an ace of sweeping us both off our legs. We struggled desperately in the icy fluid, for we knew that swim-

ming was out of the question, and felt that a very little rolling in that millrace would suffice to seal our destiny. By sheer good luck we at length reached the shelving bank. The summer visitor who derides ferry-boats and sneers at bridges writes somewhat prematurely; he would not know the same stream in spring or autumn, so mighty is the change—the result of a short and steep drainage into the sea from the high plateaux of the interior.

Passing near the farm of *Botn* (Bottom), we requisitioned some stray steeds for the second fording of the stream, riding them bare-backed and bridle-less, and drove them back to their pastures when we had done with them.

Wearisome indeed was the walk over the hill neck, and often did we throw ourselves down for a moment's rest. The night was far spent when, hungry and jaded as mortals could be, we dragged ourselves into *Ingunnarstaðir*. That we arose fresh as larks on the morrow was due no less to the climate, than to the delightful eider-down quilt that covered our aching limbs that night.

Morning broke with a cold, misty air, but soon brightened. About midday we rode down to our boat in the little voe under the *Múlaðfall* (The Mull). Setting sail, we floated softly down the firth, basking in the sunshine, and enjoying to the utmost each new beauty that was revealed as we turned the many points and bluffs. In due time we reached *Saurbær*, and were received by Páll and the rector, the latter rejoicing in the euphonious name of Þórvaldr (Böðvarson)—Thunder-wielder, the son of War,—and here our trip comes to an end.

The tourist who has "done" *Geysir*, or longs to avoid the beaten track, will find himself well repaid by the following excursion.

Let him take a boat from *Reykjavík* to *Kjalarnes* and ascend *Esja*, making *Esjuberg* (Esja cliff) his base; then by boat again up the Whale firth to *Brynjudalsvogr*, sleeping at *Ingunnarstaðir* for an ascent of the *Súlur* and a visit to the *Þórisdalr* (Thori's dale), where there is a very picturesque cascade. From the *vogr* sail round the Mull up the northern

arm of the firth, overlooked by that remarkable landmark, the storm-swept *þýrill*, whose name, really meaning a stick with tangled fringe for whipping cream, and having reference to the whirlwinds that blow around it, seems to be related to the Cumbrian *thyrel*, a porridge-stick.

Fro m the farm of *Botn*, lying at some distance up the dale horses should be got for visiting *Glymr*. A good plan would be to send a boy beforehand from *Ingunnarstaðir* overland, to order horses to meet the traveller at the spot where he will disembark.

For a good view of the fall, I should advise a trial of riding up the bed of the stream (which in July cannot be difficult) until coming within sight of the force. This, if practicable, would give an upward view of it and its cañon or *gjá* not to be obtained otherwise. Should this prove impracticable— I say *prove* impracticable, for no Iclander will volunteer to go where his father and grandfather have not been before him, and will do his utmost to dissuade others,—it would be best to ride or walk up to the fall on the north side of the river, keeping close to the edge of the ravine, till a good view is opened, failing which the fall must be circumvented, the river forded above and a little descent made on the south side, whence we obtained a fine downward prospect. On returning to the farm the same route must be followed, as the path on the south side is fit only for goats.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THROUGH FLOOD AND FEN.

But now from without A trustworthy scout  
 Rush'd hurriedly in, Wet through to the skin,  
 Informing his master 'the river was rising  
 And flooding the grounds in a way quite surprising.'

*Ingoldsby Legends.*

AGAIN we found it advisable to fare several ways, on account of scant provision and accommodation *en route*. Páll and Björn with the packhorses took the eastern or *Ferstikluháls* (Four leap house) path to *Varmakær* (Warm brook), while I was to follow the western track, skirting the seaward edge of the *Skarðsheiði* (Pass heath).

Starting at ten, the road lay first over stony ground, sparsely covered with dwarf willow, anything but pleasant or easy going during the thaws, though good enough in summer. In two hours we came to the *Laxá* (Laxwater) in the *Svínadalr* (Swinedale), fording which we struck a grassy morass which kept our company to the farm of *Leirá* (Lairwater). The redeeming feature of an otherwise monotonous ride was a charming view of the crystal peaks of the *Súlur*, and a lovely vista down the Whale-firth.

In the afternoon I strolled in a vain search for the hot springs depicted on the map, guided by a desire to know whether their waters contained a valuable proportion of boracic acid, and, for want of better occupation, I eked out the day by gathering valueless calcedonies and other mineral specimens in the bed of the Lairwater.

On the morrow I joined company with one Jón (John), a red-faced, husky-voiced *Reykjavík* fisherman, who had studied English sufficiently to make himself valuable to the Edinburgh

pony-dealer, and was now on his tour to arrange markets at the principal farms in the district. For the first hour or so, while skirting the bank of the Lairwater, the way was reasonably good, but when we got fairly upon the *Skarðsheiðarvegr* (Pass heath way) it became decidedly bad, now over loose snow and now through stony bog ; into which our poor jades often sank to the girths. Nor did the pelting sleet, which unmercifully assailed us, admit of a single glimpse of the extraordinary pyramidal peaks of the Pass-heath on our right, or the less conspicuous *Hafnarfjall* (Haven mountain) on our left. Calcedonies strewed the path as thickly as flints in a chalk country, but of little value or none. Presently we descended from our stony path, and rested the ponies for a while on the banks of the *Andakilsá* (Duck-inlet-water), a name full of promise to the gunner. This stream drains the lake that lies in the coppice-grown *Skorradalr* which may be doubtfully rendered Magpie-dale.

From the river the path rises again, crossing the *Hesthúls* (Horse neck), a heath (not *heiði*), at this season thickly overgrown with deliciously aromatic plants, and showing in some places signs of the spring grass. Another short halt was called ere we proceeded to ford the *Grímsá* (Grimur's-water), a long stream of several names, draining the *Lundareykjadalr* (Grove-reek dale),—a place connected with the worship of groves in the heathen days of the island's history—and feeding the *Hvítá* (White water) near its mouth. Here we witnessed one of those incidents of every-day life in these latitudes, which show what mettle there is left in the descendants of the old Norse vikings, despite the calamities that have combined to well-nigh extinguish the national spark. Bands of men and boys, whose ages ran from fifteen to fifty, were journeying on foot homewards from the cod fishery in the southern seas, where they had been through the winter. Snowed-up passes, rotten roads, treacherous swamps, and, worst of all, swollen, muddy torrents had to be overcome by their own stout legs alone. We saw a party cross the *Grímsá*. Holding each other firmly by the waist they formed a string,

the strongest foremost, and plunging into the cold, turbid torrent, struck up a chorus to cheer the timid hearts, and waded steadily through, while the icy fluid bubbled and rippled up under the arm-pits of the shortest. No child's play that, though some are but children in years, and it is a far cry for them ere night brings a halt, and they can dry some of their soaked garments by sleeping on them.

At four, we pulled rein at *Varmalækur*, where Páll had just arrived to meet me. Having rested the ponies for a couple of hours and got something to eat, he and I started up the *Reykholtsdalur* (Reek holt dale) in quest of relays of horseflesh, while Björn with the packponies had taken the direct path for *Hvammur* in the Northriver-dale.

At *Klapholt* (Clap [throb] hill) we turned a few yards out of our way to look at some hot springs, whose throbbing noise gives the name to the spot. We noticed a number of tiny siliceous springs on a mound of tufa or sinter of their own building, some throwing as high as twelve inches, others less pretentious. We looked carefully, but in vain, for signs of the palagonite conglomerate with which some travellers associate the hot springs of Iceland. Half-an-hour later we visited another spring of the same character, called the *Vellunishver* (88) (Welling-over cauldron) or *Arkver* (Water [river] cauldron), which has built a mound of sinter of about 1000 cubic feet in bulk, in the midst of the *Reykjadalsá* (Reekdale water). Here again palagonite was conspicuous by its absence.

From *Varmalækur* to *Hamrar* (Thunderbolts) the way is good, being in many places carried over a stone and turf causeway, that rises high above the surrounding swamp. At the latter farm we called for a drink of milk, and were greeted by the most repulsive-looking couple I have ever seen in Europe. The man, deformed and Quilp-like, was a sickening picture, and both were alike dirty and unkempt to a degree that could not be realized without actual inspection. From *Hamrar* again the way leads through the swampy valley of the Reekwater, crossing and recrossing the sinuous

stream more than a dozen times. This latter is in many places as much as fifty yards wide, but never more than knee deep ; the valley is broad and looks rich and prosperous.

Late in the evening we dropped our bridles at *Reykholt* (Reekholt), once the dwelling-place of Snorri (Sturluson), whose well-known work, the elder *Edda* (89), has no compeer in Europe. The surrounding landscape has much of beauty in it. South-eastwards the eye is arrested by the low, sombre-hued *Brennustaðaháls* (Burn-[fire] stead hause), overlooked by the Yoke, flat-topped as a table, entirely covered with snow, and gathering a thick cloak of cloud about his broad shoulders. Further north the Goatlands ice-mountain blocks the view up the valley, and seen in the glorious blaze of purple light, that so often accompanies an Icelandic sunset, it appeared to carry less snow than the *Síúlur*, but that was a delusion which would not bear the full light of day. Westwards down the grassy valley, the only prominent feature in the immediate landscape is the *Skáneyjarbunga*. This curious name, of which I could get no satisfactory explanation at the time, here seems out of place and unaccountable. *Skáni* or *Skáney* (the *jar* is the genitive suffix, and *bunga* = an elevation or convexity) = Scania, Scandia, or Scandinavia, properly a district, belonging since 1658 to Sweden, but previously to Denmark. The name, always used by Icelandic writers in its proper sense, has come to be applied to the whole of Scandinavia now so called, for the Romans, acquainted first with this most southern point of the northern peninsula, mistook the county name for that of the country, and misapplied it accordingly ; just in the same way as African explorers of our own day, ignorant of the languages that surround them, call a country after a river, and a mountain chain after a king.

We had time for this and much more reflection, ere the worthy priest, Síra (90) Þorðr (Jónasson) returned from a wedding feast. Indeed, I began to get anxious about such human failings as a hungry stomach and tired limbs, for I knew that, in one respect at least, there was little difference

between a marriage festival here and in more southern latitudes, except, perhaps, that the climate demands just a shade more of the "crathur" in the brew. Inquiries as to what might be our luck at neighbouring farms elicited the following information off-hand, which will at any rate show how everybody knows everybody else's comings and goings, and in what a state of security the people dwell. At A. only children and servants were at home—the father was in the capital, the mother at the feast; at B. the widow owner had just died; as to C. all the inmates had gone to the feast and the dogs alone were left to take care of the house. There was just a chance, said our informant, that we might find some one at home at D., an hour's ride up the dale, but that was not attractive. The waiting-maid begged us to step inside the door and seat ourselves in the hall, but that was cold work, and our horses might stray if not watched, so we preferred to wander about till just before midnight, when a couple of moving objects dimly discernible on the swamps, proved to be the worthy pastor and his *fylgikona*. The hearty welcome and good cheer that rained upon us, as soon as our host had recovered a bit from the effects of—his cold ride, made us thankful that we had awaited our fate.

Next morning we visited *Skribla* (so named, perhaps, from the *grating* sound it produces), the hot spring that supplies Snorri's bath, by an underground duct, twenty yards or more in length. The water in the spring boils briskly, and that in the bath is much too hot for immediate personal application. Its temperature may be reduced, however, by diverting the supply and allowing the pool to cool. There is no double supply of hot and cold water, nor is any appreciable deposit formed. The primitive masonry that lines the bath is in a sad state of decay. As a washing-tub for the laundress its advantages are availed of, but the good old days, heathen though they were, when men bathed, are gone for ever, and it is only a vagabond Briton, like myself, who now defiles the waters. A carefully conducted excavation of the neighbouring mound, which covers the chamber where the poet



was set upon and murdered, might repay the cost and trouble, neither of which could be great.

Not till eleven could we get away from our hospitable host. At *Snældubeinstaðir* (Spindle bone stead) we heard of a pony for sale, a handsome little four-year-old, which I bought a bargain at 140 *kr.* (say 7*l.* 15*s.* 7*d.*). Galloping briskly across the fields, we presently reached the *Túnguhver* (Tongue-cauldron). Much extolled and ridiculously exaggerated, it consists of about a dozen hot-water jets in a dirty, greasy-looking mound, about 100 ft. long and 20 ft. high, at one end sloping to the level of the river. We stopped at *Túnga* farm for a drink of milk, and then pushed across the stony bog to the ferry-stead on the White-river. Charon lives on the northern bank of the river at *Brúarreykir* (Bridge-reek), and right lustily must we shout if he is to hear our voices above the roar of the river; but he already knows of our coming, and is on the look-out for us. The river here is about 100 yards wide and very deep, the water of that dull peasoupy tint which characterizes all glacier drains. It forms the only outlet for the melted snows of *Eiríksjökull*, and the *Fiskivötn* send it many feeders. To-day the current presents no difficulties, but sometimes at this season so much loose ice is borne down as to render crossing impossible for days together. Our passage was not without incident, however, for while holding on to the heads of the ponies whom we towed astern, somebody kicked the plug out of the bottom of the boat, and the water rushing in upon us caused no little excitement, till the plug was found and replaced.

After seeing the ferryman, we remounted at his cottage, and rode for an hour and a half over bad stone bog to *Steinar* (Stones), where we arrived at 6 p.m. Here we spent nearly an hour in getting some of the ponies shod, and pushed on again for *Norðtúnga* (North tongue). The worthy bonder, who is dreadfully crippled by rheumatism—by no means a common affliction,—guided us for a space over the swamp that lay in our path. Uncertain where to ford the *Örnólfsdalsá* (Örnólf's-dale-water), we followed the common habit of

inquiring at the nearest *bær*, and 'receiving due directions, we crossed it without accident, though not with dry skins. This stream, draining some of the Fishlakes, and feeding the White-river, is variously named throughout its course, receiving the name we have given in the valley indicated, but known as the *Kjarrá* (Copse water) higher up. We found it to be some 70 to 80 yards wide at the ford, flowing strongly and covering the ponies' shoulders. It is in fact much larger than the *Þverá* (Thwart water), which it is represented as feeding—on the principle, perhaps, that the mother feeds the babe.

A few yards' scamper brought us at 8 p.m. to North-tongue, where we received a hearty welcome and a good supper from the cheery housewife, who did the duties of host and hostess in her husband's temporary absence. Believing that the Thwart-water and North-water would prove much more difficult of passage than the Copse-water, we spread our drenched nether garments to blow as dry as they might on the church roof, and turned into bed at an early hour, so as to rise betimes on the morrow, hoping by this means to cross the rivers at their lowest, viz., before the morning sun has had time to thaw the feeding snows which the night's frost has locked up.

We were accordingly afoot by 6.30 on the 18th May, but in spite of all the good Páll's efforts to effect an early start, we did not get away till 10; meanwhile, there was leisure for making a few notes. The poverty-stricken and tumbledown turf-walled church, whose grassy roof we had appropriated as a drying-ground, stands in a graveyard that has received the remains of many generations. The encroachments of the Copse-water have not spared the consecrated ground, and men's bones lie bleaching on the bank, or roll into the river below. Every one who has read a certain Domestic Legend of the reign of Queen Anne will remember what an attraction the body of poor Sir Thomas proved to be for the eels. Whether salmon are gifted with similar cultured tastes and revel over an occasional mellow fibula or cranium, is not certain, but

appearances point that way. In 1874 the bonder here took 400 head of salmon, weighing from 10 to 20 Danish pounds (1 Dan. *pund* = 1.1023 lb. Av.) each, and in 1875 the take was 250 head. In the latter year a paucity of snow during the preceding winter had diminished both the volume and the muddiness of the stream, enabling the salmon to see the net and escape it by leaping, and also allowing the farmers living nearer the sea to use their nets with better effect, by reason of the lessened velocity and body of the water. The fish is taken in the following manner. A small meshed, weighted net is spread across the river, and the ends held by men on foot or on horseback, according to the state of the river. It is then dragged for a convenient distance and brought round to a sand-bank or low shore, and the captives are knocked on head inside the net. They were selling in 1876, cleaned (*i. e.* gutted, boned, and decapitated), and delivered at the nearest port, at 29 *aurar* per Danish *pund*, or less than 4*d.* per lb., and—significant fact—at this price they were exciting competition between an Aberdeen curer and a Norwegian trader, all being destined for the English market. Yet Englishmen flock to Norway year by year, paying almost any sum that the owner has the assurance to ask for a mile or two of stream, and agreeing to abandon this salmon-fisher's Utopia (I speak of Iceland generally) to the mercies of needy bonders and greedy traders. Moreover, the country is full of weird scenery, and is both historically and philologically interesting to an educated Briton, and, if we descend to that, the cost will be immensely greater on the Continent than in the Island.

Availing ourselves of our good host's company, we avoided the impassable track and made straight across the swamps, guided by *Baula's* (Cow) trachytic cone, looking majestically down upon the *Grjótháls* (Grit-house) immediately before us. Soon we reach the Thwart-water and are agreeably surprised to find it in a mild mood. It can never be dangerous, however, for 15 yards is its greatest width, and it is never more than girth deep. It is a pretty rippling brook, and, when we

saw it, was dotted over with various gaudy-plumed water-fowl, who showed little fear. From the Thwart-water wade over the Grit-hause, which did not belie its name, occupied us one and a half hours, when we descended into the North-river dale. The clear stream, 30 yards wide, and shoulder deep, had to be forded three times, after which we could canter in a straight line over the meadows to *Hvammr* (Coomb), a fine farm lying, as its name denotes, in a small blind valley. Björn with the pack-horses had arrived the day before us.

This being the last comfortable farm on the south side of the *Holtavörðuhéði* (Holt-beacon heath), we determined to rest here and make an early start on the morrow. We found the reverend farmer busied with his agricultural duties. Here and there a little draining was being perpetrated, but it was of the mildest and shallowest description. Manuring is conducted on about the same scale. The sheep droppings which have accumulated in the pen during the winter, and have been trampled into a solid cake, are now removed and distributed over the *tún* or home-field, in little heaps, borne to their destination not by cart nor wheel-barrow, but in small wooden trays. The women, most patient and hard-working of their sex, are now set to chop the compost into coarse dust, after which they spread it evenly from a wooden tray by means of a tiny wooden shovel. Grooming, so necessary at this season above all others, is not thought of, and the poor ponies must perforce undertake the operation for themselves, whence we see them standing about in couples, making curry-combs of their front teeth, and tearing mouthfuls of long shaggy hair from each other's backs.

The traveller whose delicacy would rebel against sleeping with his guide, had better not visit Iceland at spring-tide, when tenting is impossible. Hitherto, with one single exception, Páll and I had shared the same pillow, and here, although we enjoyed separate couches, they stood both in the same room or rather cupboard, and this of such dimensions that we put our boots outside the door to escape utter suffo-

cation. But the sheets were snowy white and the quilts were stuffed with the best of eider down.

It required all our exertions to effect a start before 10 o'clock. The way led first in the bottom of the valley, crossing the *Sanddalsá* (Sand dale water), till we reached the *embouchure* of the *Hellisá* (Cave water), an eastern affluent of the North-water, where it turns sharply northwards, obeying the windings of the main river. Presently we scrambled along the *Katthryggr* (Cat-ridge), a pretty but certainly not dangerous "hog's-back" of palagonite conglomerate, probably 15 yards long. On the eastern side of the narrow path is an almost perpendicular fall to the river of about 40 feet, but on the western side it would be impossible to roll more than 15 feet. Fording the *Hvassá* (Keen water), a knee-deep rivulet, we reached *Fornikvammr* (Old Coomb), at 12.30, having ridden at a foot's pace the whole way, on account of the pack-horses and the badness of the path.

Here we were so fortunate as to overtake some farmers who were about to return home across the heath, with horses that had been sent into the southern firths—especially *Borgarfjörður*—to pasture during the winter. We easily arranged for the hire of some of their fattest animals, so as to give ours a lighter journey on the heath, and set off again in one party soon after 1 p.m. Three hours of painfully slow progress over sparsely grass-patched, stony bog brought us to the *Sæluhús* (Soul house), the hospice built for the shelter of travellers on the south side of the heath. The term "Soul"-house, or more properly "Salvation"-house, is derived from the fact that these structures, as well as bridges, ferries, and hospitals, were works of charity done for the sake of the soul's salvation. These in torrent-torn mountainous Iceland take the place of the roadside wells in the thirsty East.

The ascent of the heath itself now commenced, the track accompanying the Northwater till it became the tiniest of rivulets, though furious and rock-walled almost from its birth. Sloppy snow lay thickly in patches, and the frost had thawed out of the ground to the depth of a foot, below which all was

iron-hard. This is the worst state of things: the water cannot drain away, for the frost beneath, and the sun is not yet strong enough to cause evaporation above, the result—a stone-studded tenacious batter, monotonous, tiring, shin-breaking.

As we reached the crest of the heath, we hoped to get a full view of the Cow and her neighbour the Little Cow, and a peep into the *Tvidægra* (Two days') heath on our right, over which in the days when Æthelred ruled England, there rode a party of horsemen to Thing or Parliament, among whom was Grettir (Ásmundsson), then a boy of fourteen winters, and it was on this journey, when they had passed the heath, that the youthful hero slew Skeggi (Shaggy), the house-churl, in a quarrel about the meal pockets which they had missed from their saddles. Now-a-days this heath is seldom crossed, on account of its length and barrenness, but it lay in the direct path of the men from *Bjarg* (Boulder) as they went to Thing.

But a cold mountain fog, driven by half a gale of wind, made it impossible to see beyond the nose and tail of one's own pony, and rendered necessary the closest observation of the path, to avoid spending a night on the *heiði*. At 7.15 we struck the *Miklagil* (Muckle gill), here a new-born rivulet, and followed its bank for about an hour, when we waded it as a respectable brook. Just below our wade the ravines are rather picturesque. In half an hour more we left the heath with its fog, wild swans, and solitary raven, and crossing the *Litlagil* (Little gill) drew rein at *Melar* (91) (Sand-banks). This is a much more important *bær* than one would be led to suppose from the small dot which represents it on the map. The traveller will not fare badly as regards accommodation and refreshment, but I must warn him to expect to be cheated handsomely, for the bonder, Jón (Jónsson), is as big a thief as may be met with out of the Levant.

We left Sandbanks at eleven, on the 20th, under a blazing hot sun—a great contrast with yesterday's weather on the heath—and followed the western bank of the *Hrútafjarðará* (Rut- [or Ram-] firth water) till we reached its mouth. In the broad shallows here formed by the drifting of sand, we

proceeded to ford it, clumsy Björn (Bear) allowing some of the pack-horses to miss the wade, entailing a swim which did not materially improve the things they carried. The wade was about fifty yards wide and shoulder deep when we crossed. The river is said to contain much more salmon (running to twenty pounds and more) than char or trout. We should have expected the contrary to be the case, viz. that the lesser fish would have predominated, for the river is almost entirely fed by the Fish-lakes on Erne-water-heath, the scene of several years of Grettir's outlawry, when they formed his only larder.

Our ride from the wade to *Þóróddstaðir* (Thorodstead) was very interesting. Following the firth at a considerable elevation, we looked down and out upon the sea, for the first time since leaving Whale-firth. Our hearts rejoiced to find that the ice asserted itself only in the form of little floes, which lay stranded in the firth in all directions, and, associated with the boulders which had been dropped by the bergs during thaw, formed a very pretty picture, and suggested many reflections to the geological student. There was also much to interest the naturalist and sportsman in the numbers of ducks of various kinds which paddled about in the little bays and shallows, and the multitudes of divers who carried on a spirited rivalry in fishing in the deeper waters.

At Thorodstead dwelt Thorbjörn Oxmain, who foully murdered Atli, Grettir's elder brother, at his homestead, *Bjarg* just the other side of the Neck. There being an inn here, (one of the half-dozen that Iceland—home of hospitality—can boast), we comforted ourselves with thoughts of making a good midday meal according to our own taste. But dire disappointment awaited us. The spring store-ship had not yet arrived at the cheap-stead (92) *Borðeyri* (Board gravel bank), on the other shore of the firth, owing to the sea-ice, and provisions meet for civilized stomachs were thus at an end. We considered ourselves fortunate in getting coffee minus sugar, with never a sign of bread to thicken it. Happily our steeds fared better than we, and luxuriated in

some sweet *taða*, or hay from the well-manured *tún*,—a name not altogether toothsome withal, being derived from *tað* = manure.

Bestriding our refreshed nags once more, at 3.30 we wound out of the *tún*, hastened by a chorus of yapping curs, and struck eastwards over the Rutfirth Hause, the stony ridge which parts the Rut- from the Mid-firth (*Miðfjörður*), a three and a half hours' ride over very soft stone bog. On the summit of the hause we turned round to gaze upon the *Eiríksjökull* and the *Geitlands-* and *Ball-jöklar*, spurs of the *Langjökull*, huge towering blocks of crystal, glistening in the blaze of sunlight, and appearing to be but a short stage distant, though, in reality, there are over thirty-seven miles as the crow flies betwixt us and the nearest of the three glaciers. Feathered life on the upland was but poorly represented, three straggling ptarmigan, who had not as yet doffed one single plume of their white winter garb, were all we saw.

*Staðarbakki* ([Church-] stead bank) was reached at 7.30, and I was glad to find that the priest, Sir Swain (*Skúlason*), was an old acquaintance, we having met four years previously at the house of his countryman, the well-known Herra Jón Hjaltalín, of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

Páll and I rode a few yards down dale to pay our compliments to the venerable Sir Olave (*Pálsson*) of *Melstaður* (Sandhill-stead), who has since died at an advanced age. He gave us some interesting notes about the movements of the sea ice in the neighbouring Midfirth. On Easter day, April 16, it made its appearance in the firth, thin but closely packed and very extensive. It lay fast with the land until the 9th of May, when twenty-four hours sufficed to remove almost every floe. A dead calm prevailed during the time that it was taking its departure. Daily observations are made here of the clouds and registerings taken by barometer and thermometer, and the results forwarded to the Scottish Meteorological Society. We noticed the thermometers nailed to the western end of the church.

As may be judged from a glance at the map, the Mid-



firth-water dale is very fertile and studded with farmsteads, presenting a great contrast with the Northwater-dale, half of which is occupied by the river's numerous channels. The *Miðfjarðará* runs in a single stream and rich pastures extend to its very banks. Salmon are plentiful in it and make their appearance in the beginning of June. Sir Olave assured me that he had only once taken a solitary specimen in May, and that was on the 29th of the month. I cannot imagine a spot better worth the attention of fishermen. The farm is one of Iceland's best and but a pace from *Bjarg*, where the antiquary and anthropologist might amuse himself by continuing the search, fruitlessly commenced by the Rev. Baring Gould,<sup>1</sup> for the sun-freckled, red-haired pate once worn by Grettir the Strong. The cure, too, is now (May, 1877) enjoyed by my esteemed and learned friend Síra Þórvaldr (Bjarnason), the same we met at *Reynivellir*, a scholar, the best of guides, and a charming host. I am sure he would be delighted to receive any moderate number of guests.

It is interesting to note the direction in which the christening of the physical geographical features of the island has flowed, viz: from coast to centre. This is just what might have been expected, seeing that the names were given by colonists who, coming from other lands, first made the acquaintance of the sea fringe, and that scarcely an instance occurs (and those uncertain) of an indigenous local name. Thus for example, an indentation of the coast-line is called Midfirth, the river that flows into it is hight Midfirthwater, the valley Midfirth-water dale, and so on. But, following up to where the river forks, the coast name is lost altogether, and we find the three branches distinguished as *Austrá* (East water), *Nípsá* (Peak water) and *Vestrá* (West water).

Having arrived at Steadbank on a Saturday, we were careful to apply to the priest for permission to start early on the morrow, before the commencement of the *Guðs Þjónusta* (God's Service). The reader may probably not be aware that a law exists forbidding a traveller from leaving a place where

<sup>1</sup> "Iceland: its Scenes and Sagas," p. 298.

Divine service is to be performed, on a Sunday, until the ceremony is concluded, unless he first obtain the permission of the priest. Disregard for the law entails a small fine, which the parson pockets. Of course, it is seldom that permission is withheld, and the fine is a mere bagatelle, but he who wishes to avoid anything like ill-manners will do well to bear this in mind.

During the night of the 20th (May) there was a slight frost, but at 7.30 on the following morning Reaumur's thermometer showed 27° in the sun's rays (say 94° Fahr.).

Whilst we were dressing, a poor fellow entered our room and commenced talking incoherently. I soon saw that he was an epileptic subject, and learnt that he had been so from his birth. Our host kindly gave him shelter and food. This was the only case of epilepsy I heard of or met with in the island; the brain, strengthened by the diet of the people, is seldom affected. In common with others similarly afflicted, this unfortunate youth was a most ravenous feeder, and had a mania for collecting odds and ends, especially metal, for which he begged unceasingly, but he had another peculiarity which distinguished him from his fellow-men—particularly from his countrymen—and which I should have turned to good account had I dreamed of the short-comings of the cheapsteads near my destination. To be brief, there hung about him a number of what are locally termed *nætr-gögn* (night-gains)—the reader will excuse me from translating more freely—neatly turned out of some hard wood, and when I dropped some coins into his palm he pressed one of these useful articles upon me. I, fearing lest the uninitiated might fancy it to be a cherished friend and part of a roaming Briton's ordinary baggage, hesitated to strap the treasure to my saddle-bow, and rejected the offer. I had leisure for abundant repentance when it was too late.

We got away from Steadbank at ten, and forded the *Miðfjarðará* just outside the *tún*. At the wade we found it about forty yards broad and shoulder deep, flowing slowly and smoothly. Hence our path lay over the hause, low and

grass-grown and studded with lakelets covered with water-fowl, many of whom were building their nests. One swan's *hreiddr* (wreath) I noticed, a great heap of sticks nearly as large as the islet on which it stood.

The sun quickly lost his influence on the hause, and the north wind grew cold and cheerless. At 3.45 we descended into the valley and forded the *Vtðidalsá* (Withy dale water), nearly opposite *Lækjamót* (93) (Brook-mote), which we reached at 4. Here we left the packhorses to be brought on to *Miðhóp* (94) (Mid hope) next day, Páll and I proceeding to *Borg* (Burg) to inquire about horses. Riding nearly due north up the well grassed Withy dale, we re-forded the river nearly opposite the Burg at a much worse wade than the last, the stream being only about thirty yards broad, but rising over the saddle and nearly lifting our small mounts off their legs. We reached our destination at about 7 p.m., to receive a hearty welcome from the well-to-do bonder Pétr (Christophersson). Having spent some of his youthful years in the Orkneys, he speaks excellent English, singularly free from brogue.

Our breakfast here will ever form a memorable landmark in the journey—steaked plover and fried cutlets of *Rauðmagi* (Redmaw) or lumpfish being the *pièces de résistance*, washed down with steaming cups of chocolate mixed with new sheep's milk. On this solid foundation we started to climb up the *Borgarvirki* (95) (Burgwork), a crater-shaped hillock a little to the south-west of the farm. It derives its name from the fact that its summit was for a long time a stronghold of Finnbogi the Strong and his fellows. Symmetrical lines of overthrown and partly overgrown stones in the centre of the hollow show where the rascals built shelter for themselves out of the rough materials at hand. The site was admirably chosen for defence against people who were ignorant of artillery and musketry, and did not even practise archery, as the basaltic walls rise some fifty feet or so perpendicularly, and what appears to be the lip of the crater was fortified with artificial masonry. The fountain mentioned by Eggert Olafsson was extinct already in Metcalfe's day (1861), but a small pit seems

to mark the place that knows it no more. Pétr told us that an Iceland falcon had made her nest in these cliffs for several successive seasons, but the ghostly croaking of two enraged ravens made us suspect that they had ousted the nobler bird, and after much searching and scrambling we at last found the nest with its lately-hatched, ugly brood. We abstained from molesting the innocents, though they are most destructive vermin, and besides attacking young lambs, destroy an immense number of ptarmigans' and eiders' eggs—so much so, that I know of several farmers living in eider districts, who give a reward of 16 *au.* (2*d.*) for every head. But Iceland, robbed of her ravens, would be herself no more. There is something singularly appropriate in the hoarse-croaking, mysterious bird; he seems to recall the past and its ill deeds, with which he was so often superstitiously associated, and often the modern wayfarer over Iceland's lonely heaths, enveloped in fog and half suspicious that the "follow-man" has lost his way, is startled by the sudden weird "croak! croak!!" of the ill-omened fowl, who seems the fittest tenant of the dreary, wild, barren, stony upland.

Accompanied by our good host, we left his hospitable roof at 12, and re-fording the Withydale-water, galloped across the still brown meadows to Midhope.<sup>2</sup> Here we picked up a couple of stout nags, one a hard, trotting grey, who was destined to carry me through more than one danger. Starting again about 2 p.m., the way led first over rough but dry ground, and across the *Gljúfrá* (Cliff water), a picturesque little stream, foaming and fretting betwixt rocky walls and over a rocky bed. The second half of the stage lay through a burnt district, a cluster of hillocks of scoriaceous lava thrown up during an earthquake. Descending from among these blisters on Mother Earth's fair skin, we forded the *Vatnsdalsá* (Water-

<sup>2</sup> The student Björn Olsen of *Borg*, some years since made some excavations in an old burial-ground about half an hour's walk north-east from the farm of Midhope on a precipice overlooking the Cliffwater, but found nothing of particular interest. An account of the search may be found in the *Skýrsla um forngrípa-safnið í Reykjavík, eftir Sigurðr Guðmundsson málara*, I. 1868, 2 *kr.*, II. 1874, 1 *kr.* 35 *au.*, procurable from Herra Jón Árnason.

dale water) where it ran 60—80 yards broad, and rippled playfully over our saddles and into our boots.

We made a short halt at *Hnausar* (Sods), and then set off again down the river to *Öxl* (Axle, hence the shoulder-joint, and metaphorically the shoulder of a mountain; from the Latin *axilla*). Here we secured hay for the steeds, whom we left under Björn's charge, Páll and I pushing on a stage. Cantering along the dale, we crossed the *Giljá* (Gills water), and then spent a couple of hours in dragging ourselves and ponies through a bit of the worst stone bog I can remember, reaching *Reykir* (Reeks) at 8 p.m.

We were denied the sound rest we had earned, by the unceasing attentions of hungry bed-fellows, neither "bouncing bugs" nor "hopping fleas," but those infinitely more troublesome and tenacious phlebotomists locally known as *lýss* (sing. *lús*), and next of kin, philologically as well as genealogically, to the Anglo-Saxon and old High German *lūs*, and the modern German *Laus*. We were therefore early afoot, and promised ourselves to make a timely start, but on leading out the nags, mine was seen to be so lame from straining his hind quarters in last evening's bog that he could scarce move, and had to be left behind to join the baggage cavalcade if strong enough. The farmer chanced to own an animal that he was willing to sell—at a price—and after about two hours of energetic bargaining, supported by Páll on the one side and the whole family on the other, I became the purchaser at a little more than double the quadruped's value.

The bonder Egill (Halldorsson) was a capital smith, and very neatly mended my bridle. The sun shone out very hot in the morning, and at 8 o'clock Reaumur's thermometer registered 31° (102° F.). We left Reeks at 10.30, Páll, who rode a good fourteen stone, mounted on the newly-purchased bay. The way lay over swampy ground and across the *Laxá* (Lax water), a stream twenty yards wide and knee deep, draining the *Svínavatn* (Swine water). Hence we made straight for the ferry-stead on the *Blanda* (Blend), whose name has already been explained. We were fortunate in arriving just as the

ferryman were flitting a wayfarer across, otherwise it might have occupied a long time to attract their attention, as they lived on the eastern bank and far from the river. The torrent, though recently much abated, was still over 100 yards broad, but choked with sandbanks and shallows, whose position changed with every hour. Herein lay the difficulty and danger of the passage. In the deeper channels our steeds, towed astern by Páll and myself, had to swim for it, while two lusty fellows rowed amain against the rushing stream. Then, in a moment, we ran aground on a sandbank which, as often as not, was a quicksand, where one step might be the last in this world. But this had to be risked, and no sooner did we scrape on a shallow than our nimble boatmen leapt overboard, tow-rope in hand, into the sweeping, turbid waters, and dragged us by sheer force till we reached deep water again, then, as we glided rapidly with the current, they sprang back into their places, seized the oars, and rowed as if for bare life to recover the lost ground. And then such a boat ! and, ye sons of Vikings, what oars ! !

I took this opportunity of calling upon Herra Stefán (Stephenson) at *Holtastaðir* (Holt stead), whose influential and official position would enable him to give me much information concerning horseflesh, for it was imperative that I should cast about me whilst in the horse-country—*Skagafjarðarsýsla* and *Húnavatns-sýsla* (Skawfirth and Bearcubwater counties)—and place no dependence upon the few animals I might pick up at auctions nearer the sulphur-diggings, the chattels of intending emigrants. After coffee and cakes, our well-informed host, who adds a perfect knowledge of English to his many other accomplishments, rode with us down the *Langidalr* (Long dale) to *Breiðavað* (Broadwade). By the way he showed us where the *Blanda*, about a week previously, had overflowed its banks and covered much grass-land with sand.

While the river was at its height an unfortunate lunatic, whom we had seen in custody, made his escape, and to elude his pursuers he plunged into the torrent, ignorant of

swimming though he was, and actually reached the other bank alive and but little the worse for his cold bath.

We hired a couple of fresh mounts at Broadwade and a man to guide us to *Höskuldstaðir* (Hoskuldr's stead), and here Herra Stefán parted from us and returned home. We left at 3, and rode fast on the good path. On some lakelets in the marshes we saw several Eared grebes building their nests. We had no difficulty in fording the *Laxá* that drains the *Laxárdalur* (Laxwater dale), though it is a good-sized stream. Strange to say, it is reported to contain no salmon, only char—a direct contradiction of its name. This is attempted to be accounted for by the inability of the salmon to leap the force at the mouth of the river, but after seeing the latter I feel disposed to doubt the assertion. The forms of the rocks in the vicinity of the force are strikingly picturesque. High and long walls of basalt little more than a foot thick thrust themselves into the troubled waters from either bank, and offer natural advantages for a light bridge which it has been proposed to utilize. Our destination was reached at 4.30.

For some time I had been much troubled with a skin eruption, which I at first thought to be due to insect life, but afterwards inclined to the opinion that it was the accompaniment of indigestion and disordered blood, caused by the great change of food and the heating and constipating effects of constant coffee drinking. *Skyr* I always found to be a potent corrective for any amount of coffee, but at this season it was hardly ever to be obtained. At last I gave up coffee, replacing it by chocolate or tea, where possible, and by milk (fresh or sour according to the season), and at once I felt the benefit. The mention of these facts, simple though they be, may save others much discomfort.

The 24th of May broke with a cloudy sky and a cold southwest breeze. We rode a few hundred yards up the Laxwater dale, and called at *Njálstaðir* (Njáll's stead) to secure the services of one Niss Nicolaisen over the neighbouring heath. His daughters were two of the prettiest girls I have seen in

Iceland, but they had as much Danish as native blood in their veins. Ungallant as it may appear, I cannot help saying that the maids of Thule are not conspicuous for beauty of the stamp to which we are accustomed. The features of the face are too often expressionless, a consequence of the state of drudgery, almost slavery, in which they are kept; but their teeth are pearly white, their eyes soft and pleasing, and such lovely long hair is seldom seen in England. It needs only the infusion of a little Danish blood to make exceedingly pretty girls. In fact the influence of the mother country may almost always be suspected when a sweet face and delicate skin are met with. Of their figures it is only just to say that they are far finer than we have any right to expect under such untoward circumstances as a laborious life, and a costume which aims at making them appear "the same size all the way down."

We passed under the *Trollakirkja* (Trolls kirk) and up the Northwater dale till we came to *Þverá* (Thwart water) farm where the North-water and Thwart-water meet. Here we rested our steeds for an hour. Remounting at 1 p.m., we steered in a straight line for the prominent peaks of the *Tindastóll* (96) (Spike stool) or *Eilífsfjall* (Eilifr's mountain), the rich zeolite formation on the western shore of the Skawfirth. On our left was the patch of heath known as the *Fannstóð* (97) (Snowstud) and on our right the *Molduxi* ([*lit.* Mould-ox], a beetle, *Scarabæus*) and other hills. The ground was frozen very hard, and offered good foothold, which was fortunate, as the climbing was a little stiff. Presently we came to a very steep declivity where the soil was of a loose sandy character. Taking our bridles in hand, each led his nag down the slope at a break-neck pace that threatened to land us in the stream at the bottom, then fording this stream, known as the *Syðri Laxá* (More southern Lax-water), we climbed an equally steep bank, the commencement of the *Kolnaheiði*<sup>3</sup> (Coal heath). Here the snow lay thickly. We could see far out into the Skawfirth from this

<sup>3</sup> This, in common with several other names just mentioned, was given me by Niss, who knew the ground well. The map ignores it.



elevation and could distinguish small ice-bergs dotted all about the bay. Descending into the *Gönguskarð* (98) (Grazing pass), we cantered along the level grassy way to *Heiði* (Heath) where we arrived about 6 p.m. The bonder *Stefán* (*Stefánsson*) had the appearance, and somewhat of the manners to boot, of an outlaw. When asked what he would consider fair remuneration for accompanying us to *Reynistaðir* (Rowanstead) he suggested 6 *kr.*—a two days' summer wage. Thanks to the worthy Niss, we were enabled to dispense with the *dóni's* valuable services, and soon we were galloping down the pass again.

Fording the *Gönguskarðsdá*, we emerged on the sea shore at *Sauðárkrókur* (Sheep-water crook) and reached the wretchedly poor and lone cheapstead at about 7 p.m. Here we lighted upon a guest-house or inn that was able to afford a bite of hay for our ponies and a little creature comfort for ourselves. It was now time to part from worthy Niss, whom I can recommend as an admirable guide and most honest fellow. He was almost angry because I would not let him go on to *Reynistaðir*, but his being already *fullr* (fou') and far from home deterred me.

The view from this spot seawards in fine weather is enchanting. Away out in the firth there lies *Drangey*, with its *karl* and *kerling* (carle and carline), keeping guard at either end, just as on that moonlit night when poor Grettir, harried well-nigh to death, bought the services of three house-churls from the farm of *Reykir* to flit him to his last refuge. Farther again to the left tower the peaks of the *Tindastóll*, rising almost sheer from the sea, whilst eastwards and better towards the north *Málmey* (99) (Sandstone isle) bounds the outlook, presenting a perpendicular face westwards and sloping gently towards the other hand.

Leaving *Sauðárkrókur*, we rode hard along the good road in the valley of the *Héraðsvötn* almost due south, catching a glimpse of the picturesque farm of *Sjáfarborg* (100) (Seaburg), perched on the summit of a huge rock on the edge of the *Borgarvatn* (Burg water). It was about 9.30 when we

dropped our bridles at Rowanstead, the home of the venerable Sýslumaður Briem. Here I enjoyed a bed all to myself, for Páll put up at a neighbouring byre, unable to withstand the attractions of two charming and pretty cousins.

On the 25th a thick foggy atmosphere spoilt the view out to sea and covered all the surrounding heights, but the lower air was soft and breezy from the south-west. The valley is occupied by broad fields, the pastures of untold horses, and watered by the *Héraðsvötn*, the Swart-water and a third smaller stream, unnamed in the map, draining the *Vatnsskarð* (Water pass) and the *Valadaly* (Falcondale), and washing the foot of the *tún* of Rowanstead. Trips of barnacle geese (*helsingar*, from *helsi* [*háls*] a collar, in reference to the white ring on the neck) disputed the feeding-grounds in the marshes and kept up a most inharmonious concert. The deserted-looking and dilapidated God's acre, extemporized as a drying-ground, seems as if the inhabitants of this happy valley had given up dying. The wooden kirk, adorned with belfry, porch, and gable cross, has a draggle-tail, dauby appearance, so common here. The exterior once on a time was painted of a delicate pink hue, set off by window-frames and door of pea green. When fresh from the artist's brush it must have been the pride of the county, but generations of storms have had their effect. The lawn before the house was covered with neatly arranged rows of "chips," tilted edge to edge, and being dried for use as fuel; and the bank facing the stream showed signs of having been a kitchen-midden since the day when sorb apples grew in the adjacent fields. Immediately before the front door stands a large basaltic block, whereon lies a hammer of similar material, of daily use in reducing wind-dried carcasses of cod and haddock to a condition compatible with their being masticated by human jaws.

Breakfast here eclipsed the memorable meal at Burg; among the delicacies were young carrots and melted butter.

We waited some time for horses to be driven in for our inspection; purchasing one at a fair price, we started at 1.30 p.m. galloping over the fields between the rivers till we

reached *Glaumbær* (101) (Glamer-by). It being Ascension-day (*Uppstigningardagr*; *uppstiga* [Ang.-Sax. *upstig*] = an ascent), Divine Service was being held, and we were not disappointed in meeting a goodly number of bonders, of whom we inquired for horses. Procuring then a guide for the wade over the Swart-water, and accompanied by the priest's son, we started again at 3.30. For several miles we followed the bank of the river without finding a safe ford till at last we determined to make the attempt. Páll, the cleverest of fellows at picking out the passable places in a stream, led the way, riding first diagonally towards the middle of the current, then straight down stream for a few yards, and finally making directly for the other bank. Each of us took care to follow exactly in his footsteps, and thus managed to avoid a swim, though the cool liquid rippled over our saddles and into our boots. The current, moreover, was weak and not above thirty yards broad.

From the wade we rode straight across the meadows to the house of the ferrymen, and with them to the ferrystead on the *Héraðsvötn*. We found the waters very high, overflowing both banks, and it was evident that all could not make the passage at once. First went Páll, squatting in the stern of the cockle-shell, and dragging two unwilling steeds by cords tied round the lower jaw, leaving the tongue free. The rowers pulled to a sand eyot in the middle of the stream, and there deposited their first cargo, leaving them to breathe freely while they returned for me and the third horse, duly landing us in the same way. Thence they pushed the boat round the islet into the second channel, whilst Páll and I rode the horses across. Even while this went on the waters were rising so rapidly that the boatmen declared they did not know where to find a landing-place on the further bank. They elected to make a trial trip with Páll and one horse, and as they pushed off into the rushing flood, I could not help pitying the poor frightened quadruped who, with eyes rolled back, was snorting furiously and swimming for dear life. Still the muddy torrent grew every moment in size and impetuosity, creeping

rapidly over the portion of the islet that was not already submerged, so that I began to speculate on the chances of a horseback swim from my unpleasant situation. But presently I see Páll leap ashore like a goat, and soon the boat returns for me and my two pitiable shivering dumb companions, though not before several inches of water were flowing over the place where we stood. Fiercely the terrified brutes struggled when they found another swim awaiting them, but once they were fairly afloat all their energies were needed to keep their noses above water. Páll, smart and sturdy as an athlete, lent us a hand at landing, and the passage was over. Altogether, an hour was occupied in crossing the 500 yards of turbid, swirling stream, and fully well earned was the fee of 2 *kr.* which the boatmen received for their services.

We took a bee-line from the ferrystead over the meadows, a somewhat watery path, and reached *Miklibær* (Muckle-by) about 8.30. Hence again we pursued the same course up stream and unsaddled at *Silfrastaðir* (Silver stead) at 10, to find Björn and the packhorses awaiting us, they having taken the nearer way over the *Vatnsskarð* (Water pass). The unwelcome tidings was brought us that the Kotwater and Falcongillwater, whose acquaintance we made in a previous chapter, were rendered quite impassable by the heavy rains that had fallen in the fells which give them birth. A still more significant item of news was to the effect that the *Eyja-fjörður* was still choked with drift ice, and no ships had arrived at the cheapsteads. Under the circumstances we determined to make the most of the tough joints of mutton that were roasted in our honour, and little were we troubled with indigestion thereafter.

On the morrow we waited to hear better news of the rivers, but none came. We watched the Waters as they flowed beneath our windows, and they seemed to wane somewhat. Páll fretting under enforced halting, suggested that we should mount and ride down to the banks to take a nearer view, to which I, with kindred feelings, was nothing loath to respond.

Accordingly we saddled up at the commencement of the

watch of the *náttmál* (night meal, 6 to 9 p.m.), bidding Björn accompany us to mark where we crossed, should we succeed in our venture. We also took a couple of loose horses. We had not proceeded far when Björn rode his horse into a "well," one of those treacherous slimy pits that abound in marshy ground. Hearing a splash, I looked round to see Björn embracing the hog-mane of his steed, whose head was invisible, and dangling his legs anywhere but near the stirrups. The pony suddenly makes an effort to recover himself, when his hind legs disappear also, thus bringing the clumsy rider into his saddle again. For a moment neither moves, but Björn gets irritated at our laughing, and proceeds to dismount. His leg was just coming carefully over the crupper when the pony made one tremendous plunge, landing himself on dry land, and Björn in the bog at the same moment. To see the fat clown topple on his back into the blackest and most savoury pool, did our hearts good, and the incident formed a sore point with Björn for many a day.

The wading of the Kotwater and Falcongillwater was, we judged, far too dangerous to be thought of. But, said Páll, full of the old *Vikingr* (102) spirit, "Why not try the Northwater, there is no wade there, but never mind, let us make one!" This spurred me; where he could go, surely so could I, and I rejoined accordingly. Páll showed great judgment in the choice of a spot where to make the attempt, and we drove in the loose horses to see how things would go. They were soon swept off their legs, and down the current, snorting loudly, and leaving naught but their noses above the surface.

Presently they made the further shore and crawled out, looking more dead than alive. Still, they had crossed, and of course we must follow. Páll tightened his pony's girths, looked to his bridle, &c., and rode in, telling me to watch his movements carefully, and not to follow till he had safely crossed. Björn and I looked on anxiously, but though the water flowed over the saddle, Páll's weight helped the beast he rode to keep his feet, and he emerged with only a wetting. Standing on the sandy bank, he shouted directions to us, but so great was

the roar of the river that we could not hear a single syllable. My decision was already made, however, and turning to Björn, I bade him lay my saddle on the stout nag he had been riding. He looked at me with pitiful countenance, and begged me not to ride that awful beast who had pitched him into the bog ; but knowing the value of a fat, strong, and heavy animal in such a case, I was inexorable, despite Björn's melting tones. Carefully surveying the harness, a precaution I never omitted before wading a stream, I leaped a-back, and in a few strides my sea-boots were filled. Turning round to wave an adieu to Björn, I beheld him with his face buried in his hands, lest he might see me swept away ! I now kept my eye fixed on Páll, who directed me by waving his hand, and thus I had no occasion for looking at the water, the rushing of which is so likely to cause giddiness. On reaching the sandbank it was seen that we had still three or four channels to cross, but these were all shallower than the first, and gave us no uneasiness.

The loose horses were caught, and, all drenched alike, we cantered up to the farmstead of *Borgagerði* (Burg-garth). We deemed it prudent to ask the bonder to show us the wade over the *Kráká* (Croak-water), and leaving in his company at 7.30, we rode along the steep hill-side till we came to the furious little rocky rapid. Whilst we were re-saddling on the bank, we espied horsemen on the heath-way above us, and attracted their attention. On their reaching us we found them to be Herra Halldór Briem, one of the sons of our kind host at Rowanstead, the author of the admirable Icelandic-English phrase-book, who was returning home from *Húsavík* (*í Skjálfandi*), with whom was Jóhannes Póstr (the postman). A stout-hearted lass, having occasion to fare in the same direction, had thrown in her lot with them. This is a matter of every-day occurrence. A girl takes service at some distant farm ; she hires a horse and waits till some traveller is going that way, and under his guardianship she is fain to throw herself. He *may* be sober, most likely he is reeling drunk, but there is no alternative, *she is only a woman*, and as such must put up with everything, and take care of herself.

Our new friends confirmed the report that *Húsavík* and *Akureyri* were still ice-blocked, and that no ship had arrived. We gave them full instructions for their journey, and went our ways, each sending compliments to acquaintances left behind. We watched them for a space with many misgivings, and were little surprised to see them lose a baggage-horse in the torrent.

Once more we are on the Oxendaleheath, and, finding the way good, we canter briskly to keep ourselves warm. *Bakkasæl* was passed without a halt, and we made straight for the Oxendalewater, fording it easily at a girth-deep wade. Then we held on down the Oxendale till we came to the Thwartwater, and found, to our dismay, that the bridge was *non est*.

We looked at the neighbouring wade and sent the empty horses across; they rolled over and over and disappeared, but came up again lower down, and made the bank. It was a narrow shave, and we had small disposition to repeat the experiment on ourselves. We unsaddled our nags and sat us down in a sheep pen near by, whose stone walls would keep off a little of the cold wind, to wait for the falling of the waters. But our patience decreased as the cold increased, and we thought of a farm we had passed and of the comfort there procurable. With these reflections we re-saddled, but we could not turn our backs on the enemy without once more surveying the position. We scanned up stream and down, and found the timbers of the bridge lying scattered about, which put it into our heads to try to throw one of the beams across in a narrow spot so that we might use it as a tight-rope. But they were sodden with wet, and would have taxed the strength of Grettir himself. Then we bethought us of choking the stream with boulders and wading below the dyke, but the heaviest stones we could lift were sent rolling like pebbles so soon as they felt the full force of the torrent, and grated and crashed against each other with a noise that was not in the least assuring. Still we did not like to be beaten, the less as we were flushed with our victory over the Northwater, and at last, finding a likelier-looking wade, Páll plunged

in neck or nothing, and I dashed after him. There was a few seconds' struggle while the water flew about us, but our steeds were trusty and our nerves were strong, and we scrambled through it. A few minutes' gallop, after finding the loose ponies, brought us to Stonestead at 1 a.m. Our good host gave us the "lie direct," when we said we had come over the Thwartwater, and our ponies, our harness, and ourselves were in turn carefully examined before our story was believed. Meantime the willing maids were aroused to fetch us milk and put quilts on our bed, and the toils of the day were soon forgotten in welcome slumber.

We left next morning at 10, and in three quarters of an hour had crossed the *Bægisá*, whose bridge stood unimpaired. At *Djúpárbakki* (Deepwater-bank), where the road bends, we cast our eyes seawards, and there sure enough lay the ice-pack, firm in the jaws of the firth. Dropping down to the shore, we forded the *Glerá* of puzzling etymology—no trifling matter at this season—and picking our way among the icebergs that fringed the inner firth, unsaddled our weary mounts at 2.30 at the door of good old Jensen's guest-house.

Our host, who owns a fishing-smack, is full of news concerning the ice. It appears to be packed thickest towards the north-east corner of the island. It entered this firth at about the same time as the Midfirth, and disappeared from the bay on the 9th of May, but met with counter-currents, for it rapidly returned, and the shark-fishers who had followed close in its wake had a very narrow escape from being crushed. Yesterday a narrow passage opened, letting out the shark-fishers and admitting the small schooner we see lying at anchor.

Next day the weather worsened and became thick and cold; rain fell at intervals and the wind changed to the north, bringing the ice still farther up the firth. Björn and the packhorses arrived in the evening, having found the rivers much lower—on account of the fall in temperature—than we had.

Still the weather did not improve, and on the 30th of May it snowed heartily while "the north wind did blow." On the



last day of the flowery month it rained in torrents from sunrise till sunset. I got a warm bath and a good washing with soft soap at the hospital, which had a very beneficial effect upon my irritated skin.

On the 1st of June we sailed across the firth, while our horses were driven round by the firth head to meet us. We took the highway over the heath, ferried the Touchwood-water and Shivering-flood, and reached *Múli* (the Mull) half an hour after midnight to find all asleep. But Sir Benedikt (Kristjánsson) quickly had everything made comfortable for us. We breakfasted next morning on walrus tail, a peculiar viand, somewhat sour, but otherwise tasteless, tough, and jelly-like. We made a short call at *Grenjaðarstaðr* (Green-edge stead), where I noticed the newly-taken eggs of the wheatear, white wagtail, and meadow-pipit.

Our poor steeds were thoroughly done up, and we made painfully slow progress over the Coomb-heath. When we were yet about a mile from *Húsavík* mine refused to move farther, and I had no alternative than to turn him loose and bear my saddle on my shoulder, judging it better policy to show an independent bearing than to accept Páll's proffered assistance. But Páll, good fellow, would not allow me to subject myself to the indignity of entering *Húsavík* on foot, so galloped ahead to the cheapstead, announced our arrival, unsaddled his nag, and returned to me with the empty horse and half the population of the place, among whom I must specially mention Herra Guðjohnson and my little four-footed pet, Kátr, who recognized me instantly. Then they saddled the pony, forced me to mount, and escorted me with all honour to my old acquaintance's hospitable roof.

## CHAPTER VII.

## LIFE AT THE DIGGINGS.

Far as the eye could reach no tree was seen,  
Earth, clad in russet, scorn'd the lively green ;  
No birds, except as birds of passage flew ;  
No bee was heard to hum, no dove to coo ;  
No streams, as amber smooth—as amber clear,  
Were seen to glide, or heard to warble here.

*Prophecy of Famine.*

HERE is the second day of June, the dawn of the seventh week of summer, yet the Shivering bay is packed with ice-floes still, great flat tables of crystal between which tiny streaks of darker-hued water are visible, and this extends far as the eye can reach, and who shall say how much farther? The air is thickened with ice-fog and snow, and the grass is still brown as mould. No ship has yet arrived, and supplies are getting decidedly low. A lively prospect this for commencing operations at the diggings. Putting aside such trifles as domestic comforts, their presence or absence, it was useless to think of buying ponies till there was grass to feed them, and digging could not be prosecuted while the frost remained in the ground.

I shall not readily forget the appearance of my clothing when turned out of the boxes to dry, on Björn's arrival. The bright colours of a couple of gorgeous football jerseys had transferred themselves to my white shirts; the water had dissolved the glue from the joints of my dressing-case, and aided by abundant pummeling, had reduced the pasteboard to a soft pulpy condition in which combs, brushes, and razors were neatly imbedded. One unfortunate pair of boots had given up the ghost altogether, I mean parted from their

soles. But, considering the adverse conditions of the journey, I was on the whole inclined to think myself lucky that anything had reached its destination in a recognizable form.

Snowstorm and fog exchanged visits in a most monotonous manner till the 16th of June, on which day the flocks disappeared. In the meantime I sought occupation in a variety of ways. One day there was a public auction held at the new jail, under the presidency of my friend the local *Sýslumaðr*. The goods were those of an intending *vestrfari* (west farer), or emigrant to America. Beyond a few sheep, which fetched absurdly high prices, the only things that looked worth carrying away were a few packsaddle turfs and crooks which were knocked down to me at a reasonable figure. An auction seems to awaken the Iclander from his usual lethargic condition, and to fire him with some of the old nithing spirit. Festivals are few and far between, and he is glad of any opportunity for exercising his wit and sharpening his tongue. On such occasions chaff is bantered about in a most unsparing manner, and a lively competition is kept up in the bidding, of which the selling-off one gets the benefit.

After the auction was over, 9.30 p.m., I rode up to the diggings at Guillemot-reeks with Páll and the Doctor from Greenedge-stead, the latter having been deputed by his *Hreppr* (Rape) to conclude an agreement with me concerning the grazing-land thereabouts. The sun shone gloriously till about 11 p.m., when he descended behind the hills for a few brief hours only. We sat on the beautiful velvety turf, here so much greener than elsewhere by reason of the subterranean heat that accompanies the sulphur pits, to discuss the terms of the contract, and curled up on the same delightful couch for a few hours' sleep without so much as a rug beneath us or an overcoat to cover us.

A momentary excitement of a very mild description was the capture of a reindeer in the neighbouring *Reykjahléði* (Reek-heath). Three men, hearing of the whereabouts of the game, started in search, two of them armed with guns. Every

promising dell and each sheltered ravine was hunted over in vain, not a trace of the game was to be found. At this the two gunners grew impatient and returned home, leaving their companion to pursue his homeward way across the heath. Trudging leisurely onwards in his noiseless skin shoes, the solitary bonder had almost forgotten the object of the chase, and was probably humming a *kvæði* or poem to beguile the monotony of the way, when he suddenly espied the deer lying on his side on a mossy patch and with his back turned towards his discoverer. Leaving his poem half composed, the astonished bonder threw himself on the ground to watch the game, which presently curled his head round and fell asleep. Having no weapon but a threepenny knife, it never entered the hunter's head that he might bag the animal, but being curious to know how near he might approach it without disturbing it, he proceeded to crawl stealthily towards it, and at last actually reached the sleeping beast, seized it by the horns and turned it on its back. Thus rudely awakened, the deer, whose size when full grown equals that of a large calf or an Iceland pony, struggled violently to gain its legs, the man all the while holding its head firmly to the ground. Weak and sickly as the deer evidently was, it would probably have won the day had not its writhings contributed to its destruction by leading it into an earth-rift. Wedged tightly in this trap, it gave the bonder an opportunity of drawing out his rusty blade and hacking a gash in the poor beast's throat, through which its life-blood soon ebbed away. The antlers were brought to the cheapstead for sale. They were quite young and soft, covered with a coarse short hair to the very tips, branching very slightly and spanning about a couple of feet. Unfortunately they had been fractured in many places by the struggle. Some cutlets off the game appeared in due course on Herra Guðjohnson's table. The meat was very tender and fine grained, but deficient in fat, and almost devoid of flavour. Hanging would doubtless have improved it, but nevertheless it formed a welcome addition to our waning provisions. The

last potato (about the size of a small walnut) was devoured yesterday, the remnant of wheaten flour disappeared in the beautiful rolls Madame Guðjohnson gave us for breakfast this morning, and we are fain to fall upon a rye bread, terns' eggs, and anything that Providence sends us. It was about this time, that wandering aimlessly about the fields, I discovered some mushrooms, and hurried home with the spoils, to the intense horror of my hosts. I have already recorded how popular they ultimately became.

As the weather warmed and the grass sprouted, I sent the trusty Páll laden with bags of dollars westwards to buy ponies, set workmen to improve the way from the diggings to the sea, rented grass-land wherever I could get it, and prosecuted a study of the language. My efforts in the last direction were greatly assisted by the inquisitiveness and curiosity of the people. Every traveller I met by the way, every bonder who came to the cheapstead, wished me good day. Emboldened by receiving a counter-greeting in his own tongue, he would venture to inquire my name, and proceed thence to family matters, such as the number, names, occupations, and prospects of my brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, and aunts. Assured somewhat of my respectability, they would descend to more commonplace matters, as how many horses and men I should employ at the diggings, and what wages I offered ; and many a well-meant bit of advice was tendered. I avoided misleading answers to their queries for two important reasons. In the first place these men were very far from being fools, and if they once found me out in a lie they would mistrust me ever afterwards ; and secondly, by readily imparting the information they asked, I opened their hearts to answering my questions. Upon confessing that I still enjoyed the freedom of single blessedness, more than one bonder remarked in a tone that showed he meant it, that I must certainly marry and settle among them, and that should I look favourably upon his daughter, he would be the last to say me nay, and that her dowry should rival that of any bonder-daughter in the land.

At an auction at Greenedgestead, I picked up a couple of screws and a little packsaddle gear, and also bought a cow for the use of the men at the diggings. The greater part of the day spent at this interesting farm was consumed, however, in making an arrangement with the owners of the ruined turf hut at Guillemot-reeks. The proprietors put forward the Doctor, "the man with the dirty ears," as my friend F. christened him, to champion their rights, and a more hair-splitting, word-twisting, conceited duffer I never met. I might buy the ruins, certainly, at double their value, but then I must pay something more for the ground on which they stood, and I must surrender all on leaving. Then I must pay for the mere right to build a house at all, and that right should not include a kitchen nor a cow-byre, which would be charged for separately. And thus he proceeded hour after hour till at last I consigned him and his ruins to those mythical regions where brimstone is hotter and more plentiful than even in Iceland. This brought him to his senses, or rather imbued him with a sense which he never possessed before nor since—common sense—and eventually the dispute, which had brought large drops of perspiration on my interpreter's brow, and given me a racking headache, was crowned by a sensible document. Hitherto my men had been living in the half-rotten tents left by Our Expedition, but I was now able to set a hand or two to making a trifle more weather-proof dwelling.

Shortly after the middle of June, we were made happy by the arrival of the "Harriet" from Copenhagen with stores. With her came also a cooper to make casks for the transport of the summer salmon and the autumn mutton, and as he had to be housed under Herra Guðjohnson's roof, I was compelled to surrender my bed to him. This led to my renting the house occupied by Our Expedition the previous summer, into which my ever kind and attentive host and hostess put a table, chair, sofa, and book-rack, and handsomely furnished the little locker-bed, besides which they still extended to me the inestimable boon of taking my meals with them.

One night, very soon after I was installed in my solitary abode, I was rudely awakened by a loud explosion, which seemed to take place just beneath my window. Jumping up, and rushing to the open casement, I beheld one of Herra Guðjohnson's servants with an antiquated firearm in his hand, while near him lay what appeared like a heap of white feathers, but which turned out to be an owl. The poor bird was sitting on a chimney of my house when the churl fired at it, and was therefore knocked all to pieces. From the following description of it I take it to be a young Snowy owl, a bird of rare occurrence in Iceland, scarcer even than the beautiful Iceland falcon which it much resembles. The stretch of the wings was 36 in., their depth 6 in., length of body 14 in., of legs 6 in., of talons  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. The tiny bill was black; the iris, bright yellow; the toes (4), black. The legs were covered with white down. The prevailing colours were brown, dun and white bars, the under feathers a pure white, and the wings were tipped with brown.

To our hut at the diggings I must devote a few lines. The four walls, built of lava blocks laid alternately with turfs, enclosed an oblong space about 20 feet long and 10 feet wide. The rafters were about 5 feet 6 inches above the ground, and were surmounted by battens that held the sloping thatch of birch twigs and mossy turf. Ranged round the walls were the bunks, on which sulphur bags and birch twigs did the duty of mattresses and bedclothes. An inverted wooden funnel on the roof served as a ventilator, and the walls were lined with thin boarding to keep out the dust and dirt, but the floor was innocent of planking. One corner was boarded off and reserved for the maid who prepared the men's meals, and I had a similar corner, with a bed about a foot wide and five feet long. This was our *baðstofa* or living-room. Adjoining were the larder, the *eld-hús* (fire-house) or kitchen, and the cow-byre, each provided with a separate door, under lock and key.

Such was our simple dwelling during the three summer months. The local prison was a palace compared with it, a

Transylvanian Wallack would have burnt it down rather than live in it, a Samoyede would pull it down and erect his tent on the ruins, yet I was told that I had been unnecessarily lavish, and that the half-rotten "condemned" army tents would have answered every purpose. Really, the limit of mean selfishness and greed of gain to which human nature can aspire seems to be indefinable.

One of the mails brought me an intimation that my father and a friend, Dr. F., would visit me at the end of July. I went to meet them at *Grimstaðir á Fjöllum* (Grimur-stead on the Fells), but they crossed the river (*Fökulsá*) earlier than I expected, and we very nearly missed each other in the Midgewater desert. We rambled together over the hills that are the site of the hot springs, mud wells, and sulphur pits, Dr. F. the while giving us most interesting and instructive lessons in geology, and pointing out the history of this extraordinary formation. Next day Dr. F. and I rode alone over the desert to the Further Pits. When I say alone, I mean save for my after-rider, Stepi, the dirtiest, smallest, lightest, ugliest, and handiest little fellow of fourteen winters that it has ever been my lot to meet with; him we took to watch our horses in the Holy dale on the edge of the Ill-deed Lava. His wage was a bagatelle, he was no heavier than my saddle, he slept only when I told him to, and altogether he combined in himself the useful qualities of a man without the drawbacks, and the obedience and sagacity of a well-trained dog.

We picked our way over the great wild wastes of pebbles and sand, the legacy of the spring torrents that denude the surrounding heights, following for the most part the still visible tracks left by Our Expedition. One of the objects of our visit was the solution of a geological problem of some interest. A lump of mineral carelessly gathered by one of the members of Our Expedition on the brink of the Kettle crater, showed, on analysis by Mr. White, of Finsbury, the following composition:—



Water	.	.	.	.	.	.	8'00
Silica	.	.	.	.	.	.	48'35
Lime	.	.	.	.	.	.	7'16
Potash and soda	.	.	.	.	.	.	1'62
Oxide iron, aluminium, and dross	.	.	.	.	.	.	34'87

100'00

<i>Silver</i>	.	.	14 oz. 14 dwt. per ton of mineral.
<i>Gold</i>	.	.	0 " 9'19 " " " " "

The mineral was a brownish-black coloured, vesicular, cindery, easily powdered mass, and was generally supposed to be a sample of palagonite conglomerate, which had been subjected to great heat subsequently to its deposition. In the crevices and cavities of the mass the precious metals were found native. Mr. John Arthur Phillips ("Mining and Metallurgy of Gold and Silver"), quoting Dr. Oxland, formerly of the Borax Lake Company in California, records the occurrence of silver and a trace of gold in cavities associated with silica, sulphur, and other products carried to the surface by the rush of gases from *Soffioni*, adding that "these phenomena present indubitable evidences of the volatility of gold, silver, &c., in presence of aqueous vapour associated with sulphuretted hydrogen, carbonic acid, and boracic acid."

Again, in a recent issue of a well-known London journal, we read,—“Vast disclosures of precious metals have sometimes been made by volcanic agency. As might be expected, such treasure-trove was regarded as sacred, and has been devoted to religious purposes. The Lake of Titianea, in South America, we believe, still presents the ruins of a temple formerly covered with plates of gold, procured from this source, and it seems probable that somewhere at the bottom of the lake is a massive gold chain, 700 feet long, which was a part of the sacred paraphernalia of that temple, and which was thrown into the water to save it from the defilement of invaders.” But when we read, a few lines before, that “Hecla

(oh! that abominable *c*) is but 3600 feet above the level of the sea," when everybody knows that it is over 5100 feet, a wicked doubt enters our head as to the reliability of any of the statements made by this modern geographer.

Sitting on the lip of the great Kettle crater, with hissing *fumaroli* and *soffioni* all around, and looking out upon last year's lava vents and the far-stretching, grim, black desert of the Ill-deed Lava, I became so absorbed in the engaging conversation of my learned companion, as he accounted for each striking phenomenon, that time passed unobserved, and when we returned to poor little Stepi, we found him almost beside himself with fear of the fabled outlaws.

Arrived at Reekyledge, I despatched a mounted messenger to *Borðeyri* in the Rutfirth, to request the Scotch horse-chapman's (Icel. *hrossakaupmaðr*) agent to let the steamer there loading call for my guests at *Húsavík*, in accordance with an arrangement concluded previously in Edinburgh. Blindly trusting in that unknown quantity the conscience of a Granton horse-chopper, we laid our plans carefully, and cantered over the fragrant, heather-grown lava beds to Guillemot-reeks.

The ride hence to House-wick on the following day—a real juicy day by-the-bye—was marked by one of those untoward mishaps that mar the course of Icelandic travel as infallibly as they do that of true love. My guests had selected for me a valuable assortment of chemicals and apparatus wherewith to penetrate the secrets of local minerals in the long winter nights. These, packed with unusual care, had thus far travelled safely on a pony's back, and were now traversing the last ten miles of their eventful journey. We were passing over an exposed plateau of lava and sand, using our best efforts to prevent the pelting rain from insinuating itself betwixt the folds of our oilskins, when we were suddenly aroused by a desperate commotion among the pack ponies who preceded us. A glance showed one of the animals galloping furiously in a narrow circle, kicking frantically at the ill-fated chemical box which remained attached to a cord of just sufficient length

to reach the steed's heels. The sight extracted a yell of despair from us, while our nimble servant Tryggvi (the Faithful), dismounted in a twinkling, and endeavoured to calm the excited animal. Now the stout-hearted box gives way, and acids, salts, blow-pipes, forceps, bottles, and charcoals follow each other through space in bewildering succession; the Faithful one redoubles his efforts, he whistles sweet and soothing notes as he careers after the circulating quadruped, and bows forward, extending a friendly grasp towards the muddy tail that offers a precarious hold. When not so much as a test-paper remained of the box or its contents, the mischief-maker condescended to be calm. Poor Tryggvi! he had been cautioned and threatened and bullied unceasingly concerning this treasure of treasures, and while we sat rocking in our saddles with laughter at the ludicrous scene, he stood motionless and pale, gazing on the scattered fragments with an expression of dejected despair. We left them as they lay, staining the black lava or half hidden in the sand, a puzzle for the ravens and foxes, and a study for the archæologist of a thousand years hence.

At House-wick the weather got persistently worse. I was compelled to be constantly at Guillemot reeks, and was fortunate in being able to leave my guests in such good hands as Herra Guðjohnson's during my absence. The expected steamer was watched for daily, men were sent out on the neighbouring headlands and to the tops of commanding hills. It was the "Fifeshire" episode over again, with this additional objectionable feature, however, that *no* vessel came. More than a week was spent in waiting, a week of vexation, idleness, uncertainty and expense; entailing the cost and fatigue of a forced march across the island, and making it impossible for Dr. F. to return home within the limit of his leave of absence. I obtained them the most serviceable ponies I could get at such short notice, and despatched them across the *Sprengisandr* on the 1st of August, under the care of trusty Páll and the Faithful one, hoping that they might reach Reeky-wich in time for the Danish mail, sailing about a week later. To

return for a moment to the pony-steamer: she was seen in the Axefirth sailing so close to the rocks that she was expected every moment to go ashore; in other words, her officers were looking for the cheapstead of *Húsavík* in a firth *twenty-five miles too far Eastwards!* Let those who go down to the sea in Scotch cattle-ships and have their business in Icelandic waters ponder over this suggestive fact.

Having occasion to go to *Akureyri* at this time, I accompanied my father and Dr. F. as far as the wade on the Shivering-flood. There we parted at midnight, in joyous spirits despite the inky darkness, they to follow the right bank of the flood while I forded it and rode westwards. Returning twenty-four hours later, I was surprised to meet on the *Fljótsbakkahéði* (Floodbank-heath) the daughter of the well-to-do farmer of Lightwater. She was journeying homewards alone in the faint midnight twicker, and spoke of fording the flood, shoulder deep as it was, without the slightest thought of fear. It was on this occasion, too, that I went in search of the reputed direct path from Greenedge-stead to Guillemot-reeks. I did not find the direct path, but I made a way of my own over hill ranges, across swamps and through gullies, a way that was rather novel than direct, one that is not likely to be followed by future travellers. I was alone with four ponies—one under me, the other three in leading strings—and whilst scrambling up one of the innumerable shingle banks that impeded my progress, the led-ones resented my efforts to dislocate their necks with such effect that my saddle turned round. I followed it, my mount fell on his side, and away we rolled to the bottom of the slope. My compass was lost and my watch smashed, but beyond these there was no damage done. I reached Guillemot-reeks ultimately at 10 a.m., and fell asleep in my boots on a bare bunk, having been altogether three days and two nights without closing my eyes. Yet in an hour I awoke perfectly refreshed, ate a hearty meal, and continued afoot till bed-time. I know no other climate where a man may with impunity undergo the same amount of fatigue, sleeplessness and starvation; it is simply incredible.

The rainy weather experienced in the end of July at Housewick took a more unpleasant form on the high lands farther from the sea. At Guillemot-recks nearly a foot of snow fell in one night and drifted through the door-ways and crevices of our sheltie in a manner that was anything but pleasant. It thawed in the sunshine and put the surrounding country under water for several days. Imagine life in a threadbare tent under such circumstances; what inestimable good it would have done some people I know!

With all its drawbacks, we accepted the cold storm as a blessing, for it released us for a while from those torments the midges. These winged pests, whose genealogy may be traced back through every language of Europe to Persian, Pushto, Arabic, and Sanskrit, without a single flaw, continue to thrive in Iceland while everything else is going to the bad. True, a neighbouring lake, *Mývatn*, owes its name to them, and we are taught to believe that a sharp-witted bonder, who lived by the lake in the good old days, hit upon the ingenious device of offering up his would-be assassin, bound hand and foot as a blood sacrifice to them; but we felt that the fumes of the sulphur pits, which kept us free from F-sharps, B-flats, and L—, should in like manner defend us from these wandering minstrels. Not a bit of it. Rivalling their big cousins, the mosquitoes, on the Tundras of Northern Russia, they choked and blinded us day and night; they drove our horses miles away to less infested pastures; and twice our poor old cow betook herself to the desert to escape her insatiable tormentors. Even the very sheep would seek protection on the brinks of the *soffioni*, and we found the head and other fragmentary remains of one unfortunate who had ventured too far and been scalded alive. Other carcases we found of sheep that had been killed by foxes. Apropos of foxes, an interesting traveller remarks that their fur is in much request at summer-time; that they go about in packs in winter, destroying great numbers of sheep, sometimes even twenty or thirty on one farm; and that when the snow is on the ground they lose their blue grey hue and become perfectly white. But these amusingly

erroneous observations were made just after a visit to *Mývatn*, and the traveller had not had sufficient time to recover from the midge bites he there endured.

Soon after my guests had left, House-wick was enlivened by the advent of other visitors from the outside world, in the shape of two intelligent young doctors from Switzerland, bent on making collections of objects of natural history. They were beset from all parts by the sick and infirm, and did much good wherever they journeyed. Of course there are resident doctors in the island, about half-a-dozen, I think, but they are underpaid, over-worked and, in many cases, know less of medicine or surgery than an average London hospital-nurse.

The *Landshöfðingi* (Land's-head), or Governor of the island, also made a tour with the Postmaster-General, and honoured *Húsavík* by his august presence. We received timely notice of the intended visit, and arranged to hold a grand banquet on the margin of the Gods'-force in the Shivering-flood, to celebrate the occasion. Speeches were being prepared and verses composed when we received the distracting news that the mail steamer which was to convey our Governor from *Reykjavík* to *Seyðisfjörður* on the east coast was unable or unwilling to make the latter port, and had sailed away with him and his to Copenhagen. Long, long afterwards, when the speeches had been burnt and the verses torn into shreds, a messenger galloped into the cheapstead to tell that his Excellency would arrive in a few hours. There was no time for preparation nor ceremony. My friend Guðjohnson's house was turned out of window, tables and stools did duty as beds, and for two days we maintained a precarious existence, every pot and platter in the Rape being requisitioned. Poor Madame Guðjohnson, on her fell all this toil and trouble, while her tiny babe lay a corpse awaiting interment.

Not altogether on the passing stranger had we to rely for news of the day, however. True as may be the lines of a living Icelandic poet,—

The mighty ones of Eld are all departed :  
 Warriors from ruin'd hall, and elves from rock and stream :  
 And we alone remain, the little-hearted,  
 To tell the tales of those who Did ; while we but sit and dream—

the Icclander of to-day retains his love of lore unquenched, and the newspaper is as cherished an institution with him as it has become with us, perhaps more so, for whereas in civilized (save the mark !) England reading is an accomplishment by no means universal, in Iceland it would be impossible to find a child in its teens who could not read, and few indeed who could not write as well. While I write there lie on the table before me some sheets of the *Norðlingur* (Northerner), one of the two journals published in *Akureyri*, besides those issued from other presses at *Reykjavík*, &c. The "Northerner," consists of four small pages of neatly printed matter, and "comes out," to quote its own words, "2—3 a month, 30 sheets in all a year. Costs 3 *krónur* (3s. 4½d.) yearly : abroad 4 *kr.* : single number 20 *aura* (2½d.)." It gives news from the law courts and Parliament, several columns being always devoted to politics. Paragraphs appear from time to time on educational, economical, and agricultural topics as well as about the mails, weather, and fishing, notices of deaths, &c. There are occasional letters from foreign correspondents ; from the well-known Herra Hjaltalín, of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, and from the scribes of the Children of Thule who have reached the Promised land of the wooden nutmegs, and these give a clear though somewhat late account of the principal events of the civilized world. In deference to the native passion for Sagas (Sagas, properly *Sögur*), an interesting tale of travel or fiction is carried through the series, occupying about a third of the whole space. Not a number but contains a half-column of verses, for every second Icclander is a poet. But that great feature of British journals—the advertisement sheet—is conspicuous by its absence. Taking the papers before me, I find that of a total of nine advertisements in as many numbers, two are notices of sheep-marks, other two contain

lists of new books, among which is noticeable Shakespeare's tragedy of "Hamlet," most conscientiously and feelingly translated by Matthias Jochumsson of *Reykjavík*, the poet before quoted. The remaining five *auglýsingar* (lit. eye-lightnings) relate to lost property of varied kind. These are so eloquent in their very simplicity, that I do not hesitate to give them in full, save repeating names and the never-absent offer of a "suitable reward" to the finder:—

1. "On the 6th Sunday after last Easter, lost, a dark silk clout to the south of the horsefold at Madder-fields in How-water-dale."

2. "On the 6th of last month, lost from a horse by the Grey-booth, two corn-pockets and one rope, marked B. A."

3. "On the 1st inst., lost a man's shirt with buttons (? studs) in, on the way from Raven-gill to *Akureyri*."

4. "Last spring, missed here from the home-paddock, a red mare-foal, winter old, unmarked, and indistinguishable in other respects save that the mane was clipped as it is usually clipped from tamed horses."

5. "On the evening of the 12th of last month (August), lost, pennies to the amount of about 17 *kr.*, knotted in a pocket-clout, on the way from *Oddeyri* by *Akureyri*, east over the Isle-firth-water at the wades and out the lower gates (paths), by Swallow-beard-strand to Swallow-beard."

But this journal only represents the liberal interest: the opposite party favour the *Norðanfari* (North-farer) published at the same cheapstead and of similar scope with the preceding. Thus the Home of the Eddas may claim the honour of possessing the most northerly printing-press in the whole wide world. In Danish Greenland a journal entitled "*Atuagagdliutit, nalinginarmik tusaruminásassumik univkát*" (Something to read, accounts of all sorts of entertaining subjects), has been published since 1861, but this is printed at *Godthaab* in N. lat. 64°, while *Akureyri* lies nearly two degrees farther north.

In the early summer weeks the heaths and fells round about were enlivened by the presence of the gatherers of



*fjalla-gras* (fell-grass), or Icelandic moss, camping out in small, native tents. The supply of this invaluable lichen is, however, ridiculously limited, and does not even suffice for the wants of local patients. It is most palatable when eaten with *skyr*, but I cannot call it a dainty dish at any time. As autumn drew on the same ground was searched for the various berries that grow in such profusion in favourable seasons. Principal among them are the *krákaber* (black crow-berry), used formerly for making sacramental wine, and occasionally preserved; the *aðal bláber* (noble blue-berry; whortleberry); and *bláber* (bog whortleberry) also made into conserves and commonly eaten with sugar and new *skyr*. Of the remainder, the cow-berry, the cranberry, and the juniper, the last named only is sought for, and is used for flavouring corn-brandy. In neighbouring Greenland the black crow-berry is exceedingly common, and is eaten by the natives, served up with choice morsels of blubber, as a dessert. Bog whortleberries and cloud-berries are also very common, cow-berries rare, but none of these are made any use of.

The 20th of August is a red-letter day in our calendar. It is the Bear's birthday and, falling on a Sunday, he determines to celebrate it in a manner worthy of his fame. Invitations are sent out and liberally responded to; each male guest brings a contribution of ardent spirits in the shape of corn-brandy or rum, or some viler compound disguised under the specious name of wine, while the gentler sex prepare meats, cakes, and a variety of seductive dishes with names unpronounceable, or no names at all. The day gives early promise of sport, more than one gets his skin full before noon. We improvise foot-races on the beautiful springy turf and requisition packsaddles and sulphur bags for impromptu hurdle-racing, but these foreign innovations do not awaken spirited contests. The magic word *glima* (wrestling), however, rouses every youth present. This is *the* national sport of the Icelanders, now, even as it was in the olden times; a true outgrowth of the people. The word occurs neither in German nor in Saxon, nor in any of the modern Scandinavian tongues

(of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark), and its origin is unknown. Wherever and whenever a number of young men come together there will wrestling be commenced, let it be on a level meadow, on the sand of the seashore, or in knee-deep snow. Not a festival can pass off without its wrestling matches; and if two men fall out, they settle their differences by a bout in the *glímu-völlr* (wrestling-field). Indeed it is almost the only kind of contest that is resorted to; boxing is altogether unknown; of the knife, fortunately, they are equally ignorant; the old days of the axe and the sax are gone never to return; kicking would be worse than futile with feet encased in soft skin. When circumstances such as the weather or locality preclude wrestling, *krókr* (crook) is substituted. The opponents link any finger they choose and pull in opposite directions, the object being to straighten the adversary's finger without unbending one's own. It is a very severe trial, and few are the men who have not had one or more fingers dislocated in this way. I have seen tables and stoves overturned and bed-posts torn out of their seats before the weaker would give in. Numbers of tricks are practised, such as wetting the finger, letting a joint slip, catching up suddenly, &c., and most men have a preference for a certain finger which is rigorously trained by swinging heavy weights on it and by repeated contests. As opposed to "crook," which is a mere trial of strength, the wrestling is essentially scientific, and depends more upon skill than brute force. It is peculiar, differing from the Cornish and even the Cumberland game, the former probably a remnant of the sports of the ancient Britons, as the latter is that of the Norsemen who settled in the north-eastern shires. Much stress is laid on nimble and graceful movements. Holding fast round each other's waists is not accounted as wrestling in the proper sense, but is a special game as much as "crook," and is known as *hrygg-spenna* (back-spanning).

We cast lots and arrange ourselves in two parties drawn up in row, each under their *bóndi* (103) or leader. This is the old-fashioned *bænda-glíma*, as played by the students of *Hólar*

college. The *bændr* (leaders) pair off their men one against another to wrestle in the space between the two parties. The conqueror continues to receive new opponents till he is vanquished, and so on in turn till all have competed, the final result being determined by the *bændr* themselves, unless one shall have already fallen, when the victory lies with the opposite party. Hip, leg, heel, and fork *brögð* (104) (snares) are tried with varying success, no throw counting if the thrower come down also, which makes the play all the cleaner and prettier.

We were disturbed early in the game by the arrival of Páll from *Reykjavík* with letters for me. While I devoured my news from England, sport was carried indoors and degenerated into card-playing and "soaking." As the day wore more guests arrived, among them an old acquaintance, Big Peter of Reeky-ledge. He had not been invited, but Big Peter was not the man to stand on ceremony when there was any prospect of getting blind drunk on other men's liquor. Nithing and "chaff" became the order of the evening, and these soon led to quarrels. The scene grew uproarious and the terrace before the hut was covered with couples wrestling out their differences. Páll settled some half-dozen by throwing the combatants one with each hand, so that they fell heavily to earth and forgot against whom they had been contending. As the shades of night closed upon us those who were able found their way to the tent that had been erected for the occasion, while the rest lay where they had last fallen. Among the latter was Big Peter, who slept with a huge bottle hugged to his breast. The gentler sex, who had nothing whatever to do with these shameful orgies, monopolized the *baðstofa* for the night, and I was fain to keep afoot, lest the inebriates might bring upon themselves the fate of the sons of Thorir of Garth by overturning a lamp or attempting to light a pipe. Sulkiness and sick headaches were abroad next morning, but every man was out at the usual hour, 4 a.m., and the day's work proceeded with its customary regularity.

When the guests had breakfasted and left, I turned into my

crib for a short sleep, but had not been there long when I heard Big Peter snuffling and mumbling in the *baðstofa*. He found the cook, and asked for me; he was told that I had gone to *Húsavík*. Then his pony had strayed in the night, and he insisted on taking one of my riding-horses; this was flatly refused, except with my permission. I could hear the old fox trying to talk the girl over, and lying like a Persian in order to gain his object. Next, thinking to frighten her into compliance, he reverted to the rum-bottle he had been cuddling all night, and swore that it had been stolen from him, and that he would search the hut till he found it. Acting upon his threat, he burst open the door of my crib, to find me looking him full in the face. Do you think he felt himself abashed? Not in the least, he rushed forward to embrace me, "thou'd" me as if we had sworn brotherly friendship together, and seated himself at the foot of my couch. He complained of the loss of his pony, so I sent a lad in search of it. Then he began about the rum-bottle, and openly accused my men of having stolen it. Spying some bottles on a shelf, he reached one (which I knew contained rum), uncorked it, smelt it, and said he thought it was vinegar. The cook said yea to that. Next he put it to his filthy lips and took a pull; this unsettled his mind, and he began to think it was not vinegar, and so another taste became necessary, and this time he swallowed about half the contents of the bottle. At last, it appeared his taste had returned, for he declared his conviction that it was "rum—*good* rum," and that he meant to take it. I told him it was not mine, having only been put on my shelf for safety, and that he must leave its value in money for the owner, who was not present. He promised to pay, and pocketed the flask. In the meantime his pony was brought to the door, and he wanted to know whether I would not accompany him a space to do him honour! This I flatly refused, but sent a servant with him, and was right glad to see the drunken old scoundrel's back. Ultimately he paid the value of the rum to the

owner, but he never ceased to declare in the most abominable manner that he paid *me* the amount at the time, and that I must have kept the money, and he wrote me letter after letter, always with the same offensive insinuation. Unfortunately his position was such that I durst not quarrel with him, but may all travellers take this as a lesson, and beware of that open-mouthed, insolent villain, *Pétr á Reykjaflöð*.

In the sandy desert near Hoskuld's-water my men built a Bone-carline, as a beacon in thick weather and a monument to their memory. Here the last-men made lampoons on their fellows as they fared to and fro between the diggings and the port. The old nothing spirit was alive among them. Olave the Lazy is advised to remove his gloves ere next he falls from his horse into a rivulet, lest by their weight they drown him; he replies, "There is no danger of that," a saying of his that had become a household word among us. The Bear is reminded that he is but a bear, and that all his airs do not suit him. The Faithful one is severely twitted about the Caudle lectures he gets from his betrôthed. All are treated alike, no respect is shown. I recognize myself in the "white-capped" (from a cricket cap I wore), who repeats some lines containing words which I had not learnt to pronounce quite correctly. Even the plans and projects of my chief do not escape masterly handling. Especially I remember the chaff that rained upon the writer of the sentence, "If ponies do not go to about 3*l*, I must bring donkeys out to draw very light costermonger carts." He is at once christened *Asni* K. —the prefix can afford to dispense with translation—and bears the title ever afterwards. He is represented as crossing a lava-bed in two costermonger carts (one for each leg), drawn by donkeys with prodigiously long ears. These have got into geows, and are defying all efforts to dislodge them. Every hillock around is crowned by a cowering hen-ptarmigan or a plaintive plover, while numerous terns are pecking at an unfortunate old hound, who lies on his back, defending his eyes with toes encased in sheepskin. From the driver's

pockets protrude a gun and a fishing-rod, a falcon is perched on the former and an ounce trout is dangling from the latter. In the carts lie a couple of huge portmanteaux labelled, "My Diary, 1s." Far away in the distance are the remaining donkeys and coster barrows, being borne across the rough places on the backs of sturdy Icelanders.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## A SCAMPER TO SEETHE-FIRTH.

And helter-skelter have I rode to thee.—*Ancient Pistol.*

IN the last week of August Herra Guðjohnson made a tour to *Vopnafjörður* (105) (Weapon firth), where a Scotch steamer arrived at the same time, bringing, among other things, letters and money for me. These my friend kindly took charge of, and delivered to me on his return in the first week of September.

For weeks I had been promised that a vessel was about to be despatched to me from England in accordance with my wishes, and now I was told that none had been chartered, and no hint was dropped that any would be sent. To use an Icelandic expression, I was almost rede-less. I had between seventy and eighty ponies, and the grass was already beginning to get burnt by the night frosts, rendering the supply of fodder precarious. These ponies had been bought in the grazing country about the western firths; they had been snatched, as it were, from the hands of the horse-chapman, and would, in the ordinary way, have been flitted from the country. They were surplus stock, which no Iclander would think of buying at the verge of winter, and it would have been imbecile to suppose that sufficient hay could be bought for them within a traversable distance or even in the whole island, for it must be remembered that the hay grown here is intended for cows and sheep. Only a few farmers can afford to keep even their favourite riding nags on hay through the winter; the great majority of these ill-used quadrupeds are turned out to pick up the best living they may on seaweed, fishbones,

and other rubbish. But then, like the bears, they must be very fat when turned out, and must do little or no work after the middle of August, whereas my animals had laboured hard and constantly, and might well be described as meagre. It appeared probable that the final office of my poor, willing beasts would be that of garnishing the hooks of the shark-fishers. But a chat with Herra Guðjohnson threw a ray of light across my path. It had been given out that another steamer was to call at *Seyðisfjörður* some days later to take in sheep, and I conceived the idea of starting at once for that cheapstead and endeavouring to find room in this boat for the ponies.

No time must be lost. I supped at *Húsavík*, and then started for *Þeistareykir* about midnight. As a return for my unseasonable hour of travel, I witnessed a magnificent lunar rainbow, a broad, distinct arc of pale-yellow light, weird and wonderful. Presently a meteor shot across the bow so large and luminous that my pony started at it; and for a while Aurora added its glories to the silent scene, the first (Sept. 8) display of the autumn.

Folk were already afoot when I reached the diggings. I called the men together, told them my intentions, and at once discharged all superfluous hands, at which there was not a single murmur. I directed that all the packhorses should be turned loose, their shoes looked to, and preparations made for starting after me on a certain day with the whole drove as far as *Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum*, where they were to await my return. This spot was chosen for the rendezvous, as it possesses admirable pastures, and stands at the fork of the roads to *Vopnafjörður* and *Seyðisfjörður*, thus being convenient for whichever way we might have to take. I paid off the discharged hands, and snatched a frugal breakfast while my riding ponies were being caught and their shoes made secure.

At 10 I exchanged a parting blessing and a doff of the cap with the honest lads who stood around, and sprang into my saddle. For my own riding I had my two favourite blacks,



*Surtr* (the Black), a splendid ambler, so called after the heathen fire-giant, the mythical destroyer of the world; and *Loki*, a furious galloper, nicknamed (like myself) from the evil giant-god of the Northern mythology. These I supplemented by a neatly-made little piebald pacer, fast and enduring; and on an old grey followed my indispensable footman, Stepi the Small. The weather was fine and warm, and my fiery steeds soon threw themselves and me into profuse perspiration. Reeky-ledge was reached in a short five hours, but here we had to wait three hours for the company of the ferryman who is to flit us over the *Jökulsá d Fjöllum* (Glacier water o' the fells).

The workmen are busy in the hay-field, and at last Big Peter sulkily saddles his noted grey, *Baldr* (a heathen god of noble disposition) and prepares to accompany us in person. We start at 6 p.m., and ride recklessly over the excellent way on the Midgewater-desert, till we come to the new lava that was thrown up by a scatter of local vents all about this neighbourhood, well shown in the map that illustrates Capt. Burton's "Ultima Thule." Here great caution must be observed, for the black, vitreous stone flood has usurped the path, and a new one must be taken to avoid it. This is not an easy matter, for geows large and small run in every direction, and threaten to break the legs of the unwary. Indeed, one of the ponies of the Governor's cavalcade fell bodily into a rift here, and a man had to be let down to cut its throat, as it was immovably jammed betwixt the rock walls. After much searching we found a passable spot over the worst fissure, but my little piebald slipped his hind legs in, and only escaped entombment by a most desperate scramble.

Presently we leave this treacherous district, which calls loudly for beacons to guide the wayfarer, and emerge upon the alluvial plain of the Glacier-water. Away to our right, a few yards only from the path, rises the *Hrossaborg* (Horse-burg), a hollow cone of palagonite tufa most interesting to the geological student. It was examined by Doctor C. le Neve Foster on his way to visit me at Guillemot-reeks, and his remarks, noted at the time, will convey in a few words the

impressions of a well-known practical geologist concerning this hill in particular and the palagonite formation in general. Doctor Foster considers that the *Hrossaborg* is evidently a crater of subaërial origin and of late date, for it has sprung up in the alluvial plain of the *Fökulsá*. The inference drawn from the dip of the strata composing this and similar tufa hills, especially by some of the older geologists, has been that the beds of matter were deposited horizontally under water, and *subsequently* tilted into their present position by a force acting from below; but Doctor F., like most modern geologists, sees no reason for this supposition, and finds it much simpler to suppose that the tufa is a subaërial ash, the dip of the strata representing the angle of repose of the dust, sand, and stones that were showered out and fell over the lip of the crater. In very many instances hills of tufa will, in the Doctor's opinion, be found to be remains of craters. The entire crater will not necessarily remain, because an outburst of lava may have broken down half of it or more, and parts may have been washed away. The tufa of the Kettle crater at *Fremri-námar* and that of *Helvíti* (106) (Hell-wite) near *Krafla*, he declares to be undoubtedly subaërial, and he denies the necessity for seeking a different origin for the tufa of the *Hlíðarnámar* and *Þeistareykjarnámar*, simply because the hills do not in these cases retain the symmetrical features of the craters before named; and all the greater weight is lent to this position by the fact that the Kettle is several hundred feet higher above the sea than any of the other localities mentioned. Of course palagonite tufa may be subaqueous as well as subaërial, but in the former case we may reasonably expect to find the remains of sea-shells, here as in the subaqueous palagonite of Palagonia in Sicily, the first which came under the notice of mineralogists. We know that they existed in the neighbouring seas because they occur interbedded in the *Surtarbrandr* or lignite formation. Moreover, if the tufa were a sedimentary rock, in the sense of volcanic ash deposited by water as a sediment, it would probably be more perfectly stratified than it is. The argument that

palagonite tufa must have been formed under water because palagonite is a hydrated mineral, does not necessarily hold good. Considering the quantity of steam emitted by volcanoes, it is quite possible that a hydrated mineral might be formed by them.

The following analysis by Prof. A. Voelcker of a sample of this substance brought from Iceland in 1866 by the author's father will be acceptable to some of my readers, as it differs alike in scope and detail from others which have been published :—

Moisture . . . . .	10.79
Organic matter and water of combination . . . . .	2.78
Phosphoric acid . . . . .	0.23
Sulphate of lime . . . . .	0.23
"          (containing sulphuric acid . . . . .	0.14)
Chloride of sodium . . . . .	0.84
"          (containing chlorine . . . . .	0.51)
Oxide of iron . . . . .	7.04
Manganese . . . . .	traces
Alumina . . . . .	24.39
Lime . . . . .	9.10
Magnesia . . . . .	4.83
Potash (in a state of silicate) . . . . .	0.90
Soda (       "       "       ) . . . . .	1.02
Silica . . . . .	37.85
	<hr/>
	100.00

The pale and sickly moon has retired behind a dense curtain of cloud whilst we have been boring the patient reader with scientific reflections, and when we reach the bank of the turbid stream darkness broods upon the face of the waters. We dislodged the ferry-boat from the niche where it lay, bottom upwards, and heaped over with heavy stones, as a safeguard from the effects of possible floods. But the carelessness that never leaves an Icelander soon manifested itself; the plug had been removed from the bottom of the boat, and our best efforts failed to discover its where-

abouts, and we were fain to cram one of Big Peter's gloves into the hole as a substitute. Hobbles were put on Peter's spare horse, whom we left on an islet in the stream, and the others were unsaddled ready for the swim. To save the trouble of a double journey across the river, Peter proposed driving the horses before us, and following all together in the boat. The eminent stupidity of this plan was fully proved by the sequence of events, but Peter was already *kendr*, as his countrymen say, that is "acquainted" (with liquor), and fearing to leave him alone in the boat, or with no companion other than Stepi the Small, I was induced to accede to a step that I inwardly condemned. We drove the ponies into the hurrying flood and followed as rapidly as might be with the saddles, but on reaching the further bank not a quadruped was to be seen, nor even so much as a footprint in the sand that should tell us the direction our steeds had taken. We secured the boat, piled the saddles near it, and fared in different directions in search of the truants. At length I discovered a single track about a quarter of a mile from the ferry-stead, and this I proved by feeling to be wet and therefore fresh. I hailed my companions, and we followed on the trail, carrying our noses like eager foxhounds, till we came to the end of the sand, and with it the end of any hopes of finding the beasts before daylight.

Peter's rede now was that we should relinquish the search and endeavour to reach *Nýbær* (New-by), a farm about half an hour's ride S.E. from the ferry stead on the Glacier-water, and occupied since the publication of the map. By some good fortune we stumbled upon this place about an hour after midnight, awoke the inmates, and quickly had beds put at our disposal. Rising in the morning at six, we found our ponies grazing in the *tún*. The home-folk had gone out in the first rays of day-light and, knowing exactly where the best grass patches lay, had easily come upon the hungry nags.

We nibbled a handful of dried cod for breakfast, and got into our saddles again at nine. A short quarter of an hour's

gallop brought us to *Grímstaðir* (Grimur's-stead). While we halted to exchange news, the good bonder insisted on our sipping chocolate thickened with Danish biscuits. We heard that the steamer was expected at *Seyðisfjörður*, and that the priest, Sir Þórvaldr of Temple-close was "massing" at the neighbouring farm of Madders-dale, for it was Sunday. Knowing that my reverend friend, whose guest I had been four years previously, retained much of the influence enjoyed by the clergy some generations ago, I determined to see him.

Descending immediately into a sand cliff we (Stepi and I) waded a small stream, picked our stony way over the *Biskups-háls* (Bishop's-hause), and then rode hard over a sandy plain covered with little hillocks, on which grew a profusion of wild oats, till we came to *Víðidalr* (Withy-dale), where we called for a drink of milk and changed mounts. The way worsened again, first over grass-land covered with a sparse growth of stunted willow and a constant succession of nasty blind ditches, and later over rough stones, which continued till we had got through the *Vegaskarð* (Way-pass). Then, fording the *Skarðsá* (Pass-water), we emerge on another sandy plain. Away to the left, I can distinguish the *Goðahóll* (Gods'-hill), the site of a heathen temple, a spot visited in company with Captain Burton in 1872, but which did not realize our expectations. *Möðrudalr* (Madders-dale), the finest farm in all Iceland perhaps, is reached at 3 p.m., and we throw ourselves on the grass to await the conclusion of mass.

Sir Þórvaldr regarded me with mute astonishment when I addressed him in his native tongue, and it was some seconds before he recognized the heavily-booted ruffian who stood before him. A word of English dispelled the illusion that I was an outlaw from the neighbouring desert, and we adjourned within doors for a chat. I soon extracted the information I required, and decided to accept the priest's kind invitation to accompany him to Temple-close on the morrow. The *Réttir* (Rights) season commences on the 8th of September. On that day men start on horseback from every farm to scour the fells and lava beds for the sheep who have been out on the

summer pastures. These are driven to common folds formed of walls of lava blocks to be found in every district and known as *réttar*, from the fact that the flocks are here distributed *aright* to the several owners in accordance with their well-known marks. Ten days or a fortnight are commonly occupied in driving them in to these folds, and considerable hardships are often suffered by the shepherds. In consequence, however, of the Scotch horse-chapman having advertised that he should hold a market on a certain day, many sheep had already been "raked" together by the owners, who were tempted by the prospect of hard cash from the Scotchman in lieu of having the amount simply "scribed in" to their credit at the cheapstead. These hastily gathered herds had been despatched on their journey, and we shall follow in their footsteps to-morrow.

On inquiry for old faces, I found that Death had been garnering since last I was here. Not only was the venerable owner gone to his last rest, but quite recently one of his daughters, the Beauty of Madders-dale, had died in bringing forth her firstborn. The remaining sister, with her husband and his widowed brother (two brothers married two sisters) now share the estate, and at the time of my visit, the father of the brothers, who had been driven from his farm in the *Jökuldalr* by the pumice eruptions of Easter, 1875, was residing with them. I had been interested in the beautiful dresses, radiant with silver trimming, which I had caught a glimpse of as the fair wearers tripped from the kirk, and I hoped to make a closer inspection of them indoors, but Icelandic etiquette does not recognize petticoats in the drawing-room, and the ladies at once doffed their splendid robes and retired to the kitchen, where they busied themselves in the preparation of many savoury dishes.

We arose betimes on the 11th, and 9 o'clock found us in the saddle, after a breakfast that would have done credit to the Land o' Cakes. We formed an exceedingly well-mounted little party. Sir Þórvaldr, on a well-tried roan; one of the young bonders from Madders-dale, on a spanking little piebald

mare ; the bonder from Withydale ; Stepi the small, perched on a huge grey ; and I on Surtr ; each had besides one or two remounts. As we spared our nags over the undulating desert of sand and rounded pebbles immediately eastward of Madders-dale, one of the party recounted how he had been caught in a snow-storm here, and remained out for forty-eight hours before he was discovered by the searching parties. An hour and more of this kind of ground was gone over, and then we descended considerably to the grassy banks of a good-sized river. The name of this stream has escaped my memory, and though shoulder deep, and some forty yards broad, it is omitted from the map, which indeed, concerning this region, is about as incorrect as may be. We let our steeds roll here for a few minutes, then, fording the stream, we climbed its further bank and found ourselves on a wide plateau overgrown with grass and dwarf willows. The way was good, and provoked us to trying the mettle of our mounts, so that the pace grew furious. In this way we reached the verge of the *Jökuldalr*, and, descending the very steep path that led from the heath to the dale, we drew rein at *Skjöldólfsstaðir* (Shield-wolf stead), in four and a half hours from Madders-dale. The name of this farm suggests a few reflections concerning shields generally. The shield was used as a signal among the old Norsemen ; the hoisting of a red shield preceded a battle, but when a white shield was shown, the battle was to cease. War ships were lined from stem to stern with a wall of shields, and the halls of the ancients were hung all round with them. Some were furnished with a painted or carved ring representing mythological or heroic subjects. Such were a lordly gift, and gave rise to several poems treating of the subjects carved or painted. These rings are the earliest works of Northern art on record. The Icelandic expression for a coin is supposed to be a derivative from the same Gothic root, *skildus*, from its shape and markings, and, in fact, an old poet, Bragi, calls the shield, "The penny of the hall of Odin." Again, *Skjöldungar*, the famous lineage of the kings of Denmark, from Skjöld, the son of Odin, is derived in the Danish legend

from his having been found when an infant in a bed of reeds to which he had floated on a shield, but the name is properly to be attributed to the ancient Teutonic custom of electing the king by lifting him on a shield in the assembly.

From Shieldwolf-stead we followed down the valley of the *Fökulsá-á Brú* (Glacier-water of the Bridge), a succession of grass-fields torn by rapids descending from the heath at right angles to the main channel. The possession of a bridge is sufficient to provide the river with a surname. On the map it is shown as having two "bridges:" we shall cross one of them by-and-by, the other I advise nervous travellers to avoid, for instead of a bridge, two rotten ropes span the stream, and over these the wayfarer is hauled in a kind of tea chest.

As we rode along it was interesting to note the erratic distribution of the pumice and ashes that were showered over this region during the vomiting of the *Dyngjufjöll* (Bower Fells) in the Easter of 1875. These were the volcanic eruptions described in the *Times* as having "caused the greatest distress to more than 4000 people"—a most unhappy exaggeration, reflecting the deepest discredit on its authors. As a matter of fact only four farms, all in this valley, suffered severely, these are *Brú*, *Eyriksstaðir*, *Hákonarstaðir* and *Arnórstaðir*. The last named is but a short space from Shieldwolf-stead, where very little trace of the pumice now remained, but at Temple-close we shall presently see where the grey powder has been swept from the fields and fills every path.

This leads me to another point of interest. In the unpublished journal of an experienced young geologist, which was kindly lent to me for perusal, I find it said that, "it is generally believed in Iceland that although the grass may be choked, and even temporarily destroyed, by showers of volcanic dust and ashes, it will eventually reappear and thrive, but little the worse for the invasion, but that where *pumice* has once fallen in any quantity the vegetation will never afterwards reappear, and many farms in various parts



of the country have been abandoned at different times owing to a more or less well-founded belief in this occurrence." Strangely in conflict with this observation is an article which appeared in a *Reykjavík* newspaper, *Ísafold* (Icefield: another name of Iceland), on Dec. 15, 1876. Believing that many of my readers will be curious to see Icelandic type, and with a view of showing at a glance the near relationship of our own language to this classic tongue, I have transcribed the column in full, adding by the side a translation, which I have endeavoured to make as literal as possible and at the same time comprehensible to readers who have other aims than the study of inflexions, accents, and affixes.<sup>1</sup>

FRUMEFNIN Í VIKRINNI, ER  
FJELL Á ÍSLANDI 29  
MARZ, 1875.

Margir menn hafa ímyndað sjer, að í vikrinni, er fjell á Íslandi 1875, sje fólgin frjóv-gunarefni, sökum þess, að það gras, er upp komst gegnum öskuskófina, þótti bæði frjótt og kostagott.

Fyrstu fregnir, er bárust frá Reykjavík til Englands og Hafnar í vor er leið með Marz-póst-skipinu, sögðu, að vikrin hefði orðið Austur-landi að fundnu fje, því aldrei hefði það staðið í meiri blóma, enda hefði gras þotið upp þar sem aldrei hefði sjezt stingandi strá áður. Það

FIRST-STUFFS (ELEMENTS)  
IN THE PUMICE WHICH  
FELL IN ICELAND 29  
MARCH, 1875.

Many men have imagined (them) that in the pumice which fell in Iceland 1875 is hidden fertilizing-stuff, *sake this* (because) that that grass which up came through the ash-covering (was) thought both fruitful and *taste-good* (sweet).

The first news which bore (themselves) from Reekwich to England and (Copen)-hagen in the spring, on the way with the March post-ship said that the pumice had become (for) East-land a *found fee* (Godsend), because never had it stood in more bloom, and had grass

<sup>1</sup> Pronounce *ð* as *than*, and *þ* as *hing*.

væri því auðsætt, að í vikrinni væri mikið frjóvgunar magn. Nú var það ljóst, að ef þetta skyldi reynast satt, láu á Austurlandi miljónir vætta af þeirri vöru, er öllu landinu reið á að ná í: frjóvgandi áburðarefni. Eg ljét því leysa upp vikrina hér í frumefni sín, til þess að vita vissu mína á þessa efni, og fékk til þess G. D. Liveing, prófessor í efnafræði við háskólann hér, og eptir hans úrlausn eru þessi frumefni í vikrinni:—

sprung up there where never had (been) seen standing straw before. It were therefore easily seen that in the pumice were mickle fertilizing-main. Now was it *light* (evident), that if this should *rown* (prove) *sooth* (true), lay in Eastland millions weight of those wares which all lands are in need of: a fertilizing *onbearing-stuff* (manure). I let therefore *loosen up* the pumice here *into its first-stuffs* (analyze it), to this (end) to *wit* (know) certainty mine on this matter, and fetched to this G. D. Liveing, professor in *stuff-learning* (chemistry) at the high-school (University) here, and after his *out-loosening* (analysis) are these first-stuffs (elements) in the pumice:—

Tinnuefni (flint-stuff)	. . .	63·2	per cent.	Silica.
Brennisteinssúrleirjörð (Burn [brim-]stone's-sour = sulphuric acid—clay earth)	. . .	11·3	”	Alumina.
Járnefni (iron stuff)	. . .	12·4	”	Iron.
Pottaska (potash)	. . .	3·8	”	Potash.
Ökusalt (ash-salt)	. . .	6·7	”	Soda.
Steinlím (stone-lime)	. . .	2·7	”	Lime.

“Litlar drefjar finnast af phosphorsýru, magnesium og mangan.”

Um pottöskuna, sem er hið

“Little traces find (themselves) of phosphoric acid, magnesia and manganese.”

About the potash, which is

eina frjóvgunarefni, er finnst í vikrinni, fer prófessor Liveing þessum orðum: "Það er með naumindum, að nóg sje af pottösku í vikrinni til þess, að hún geti orðið að gagni sem áburðarefni, og til þess, yrði vikrin að liggja mjöglengi í beru lofti. Pottaskan er hjer, eins og eg minntist á við yður um daginn, svo föst fyrir, að mörg ár hljóta að ganga til þess að leysa hana frá hinum efnunum, sem í vikrinni eru." Munnlega gat prófessor Liveing þess, að tuttugu ár að minnsta kosti, yrðu að ganga til þess, að fá þetta litla frjóvgunarefni leyst úr vikrinni.

Það er því ráðgátulaust efni, að vikrin, sem fjell 29 Marz, 1875, hefir ekkert frjóvgunarefni í sjer, er nokkurn tíma geti komið að notum, og öll ímyndan um frjóvgunarmagn hennar er alsendis ástæðulaus. Það eina, sem vikrin hefir gjört, er að skýla grasróttinni við kali. Það er allt og sumt. Menn skyldu

the one fertilizing-stuff which finds (itself) in the pumice, fares professor Liveing (with) these words: "It is with narrowness that enough is of potash in the pumice to this (end) that it can become of gain as *onbearing-stuff* (manure) and to this (end) must the pumice lie much long in *bare loft* (open air). The potash is here, *one and* (as) I *minded on with* (mentioned to) you the other day, so *fast for* (difficult of extraction) that many years must needs go to this (end) to loósen it from the (other) stuffs which in the pumice are." *Mouthly* (orally) guessed professor Liveing this, that twenty years at least cost need to go to this (end) to fetch that little fertilizing-stuff loosened out of the pumice.

That is therefore (a) riddleless matter that the pumice which fell 29 March 1875, has no fertilizing-stuff in it, which (at) any time can *come to net* (be of use), and all imagining about its fertilizing-main is to all end *on-standing-less* (groundless). The one (thing) which the pumice has *garred* (done), is to shield the

því gjöra allt er gjört verður, að hafa vikrina brott af túnum sínum, því að þegar hún fer að verða vatni þrungin, sekkur hún í svorðinn, og verður þá hið mesta kuldaefni fyrir grasrótina.

Cambridge, 9 Okt. 1876.

Eiríkr Magnússon.

grass-root from cold (i.e. during the winter that intervened). That is all and some. Men should therefore *gar* (do) all that *garred* may be to have the pumice away off their "túns" (home meadows), because that when it fares to become *water-thronged* (wet) it sinks into the sward and becomes then the most cold-stuff for the grass-root.

After this long and wearisome digression let us return to the journey. *Hofsteigr* (Temple close) was reached without further incident, and there we supped and slept, the guests of the hospitable and entertaining Sir Thorvaldur. Next morning we breakfasted early, and by 7 o'clock were faring down the Glacier-dale towards *Fossvöllr* (Force-field) where the sheep market was to be held. The ride was most interesting. On both sides of the river are visible symmetrical terraces of sand and rounded pebbles, three or four in number, receding from the river as they rise one above another and generally corresponding on each bank except where recent erosion has removed a portion. The terraces have doubtless been formed by the action of water, either in a solid or in a liquid state, probably by both at different periods.<sup>3</sup> It is possible of course that in bygone ages the Glacier-water may have rolled a flood more than a mile wide, and some 200 feet in depth, which are the dimensions indicated by the highest terrace, but it seems more probable that glacial action was the first to come into play in eroding and deepening the valley, these benches forming the lateral moraines left by the glacier on its way to the sea. This supposition will seem the more likely when we come to speak of the *roches moutonnées* and

<sup>3</sup> Dr. F. considers them purely alluvial, and thinks they are too regular for moraines.

other evidences of an ice-age noticeable on the high heath that looks down upon *Seyðisfjörður*.

The Force-field wore an unwonted air of bustle and business, every little dell was occupied by a flock of snow-white fat sheep guarded by house-carls and hounds, while the bonders were collected in force at and about the humble homestead, eagerly discussing the weighty subject of the day, the *fjármarkaðr* or fee-market. In his sheep is concentrated the sum total of an Icclander's wealth, and on the autumn market he depends to realize a sufficient sum to wipe off the summer's debt at the cheapstead and to induce the chapman to replenish his store of necessities for the winter. Even the very etymology of the word insists on its importance, for *fé* (fee) signifies "property," and bears no philological relation to a sheep (*sauðr*), but "sheep" being "property" *par excellence*, the name has attached itself to them from very early times.

Among the crowd of skin-clad legs of the natives, I presently discovered a huge pair of sea-boots, and thither I wended my way, rightly suspecting the owner to be the fee-chapman's factotum. Before I had time to allude to my errand he drew a paper from his pocket and presented it to me—it was an authority to receive my ponies. A load was lifted from my shoulders, and I felt glad that I had risked the ride, but a reflection stole upon me concerning the wisdom of a step that would have left this all-important document buried in the recesses of the sheep-dealer's pocket had not chance directed me to the spot.

Thus relieved, I stopped to see the fun of the fair. A difficulty arose because some bonders, whose flocks were notably inferior both as to fatness and condition of the wool, insisted on the same price for their herds as was offered for the best. This policy nearly led to a dead-lock. For hours each party tried to "best" the other, but Sir Thorvaldur and I managed at last to effect a compromise, and at three in the afternoon buying commenced and continued till dark. The market broke up about 9 o'clock, and the bonders fared homewards.

on their amblers. Riding up the Glacier-dale in the darkness was no joke. Our fiery steeds were put on their mettle by the chill frosty air, and fought constantly for the lead, jumping or swerving at every instant to escape holes that were invisible to us. This, in a path that was only intended for one animal at a time, and ran by turns across a swampy moor, on the brink of a gravel terrace and down and up the steep banks of a tiny thwart-water, made steeple-chasing appear quite easy-chair sport in comparison.

We did not get between the sheets at Temple-close till two on the following morning. After four hours' sleep I was up again and ready for the start, but heard that some other travellers wished to join my company over the heath, and for these I waited till eleven. At last we got away in scorching sunshine, and I pitied a brave little lass of our party who had scarcely entered her teens, yet laughed at the fatigues of a ride to *Akureyri*. Two hours' easy pacing up the Glacier-dale brought us to Shieldwolfstead, and five hours later found us at Madders-dale. I left here again at 8 p.m., alone on Surtr, and posted to Grimurstead—three hours of nasty riding over an almost trackless desert, and in darkness so complete that I could not see my horse's head. With any other pony than my trusty Surtr, I would not have attempted it. On reaching Grimurstead I stumbled against the door porch without being able to see it. Here I found the carles and the horses awaiting me.

In the morning we galloped round to whip up the stragglers, some of whom had wandered down to the ferrystead on the Glacier-water o' the Fells, and filed slowly away on the road to *Seyðisfjörðr*. At Withy-dale we halted a while, and exchanged a tired mare for another horse. Maddersdale was reached in the afternoon, and the jaded beasts were let loose on the wide fields, where the bait was still good, though the frost had rendered it of brownish hue. We let them revel here till the sun was high in the heavens next morning, and after scouring the hollows and counting the drove, we pushed on at eleven over the Maddersdale-way, across the

heath, through Shieldwolfstead, where we halted for an hour to examine shoes, &c., and then down along by the Glacier-water to Temple-close. Here the bait was not so good on account of the pumice showers before mentioned, and we did not hurry to start till midday. At the *Hvanná* (Angelica river) we experienced some little difficulty as the ford was very narrow, the stream deep and rapid, and the bed full of huge boulders. It is a villainously dangerous stream during the spring floods. We saw little trace of the wild angelica from which it is named, and which was used in the olden days for giving a flavour to ale.

A greater obstacle presented itself in the Glacier-water o' the Bridge. The little wooden bridge by which we were to cross the torrent spans it at a narrow spot where the black walls rise high and grim, and where a fall would bring sudden death to man or horse alike. The *brú* is so narrow as only to admit one loaded packhorse at a time, and is railed strongly at the sides, but there is no specific approach, either end of the structure rests in the middle of a small grass patch, and all around are slippery volcanic rocks. Every one who has fared across Iceland with pack-horses will remember their sheep-like habit of crowding and crushing one another where the way is narrowest. The unpleasant consequences of this habit were intensified here inasmuch as some of the animals became frightened at the reverberations and the rush of water beneath them when they reached the middle of the bridge, and it required all our efforts with a drove of some sixty animals to avoid accidents. We succeeded, but it occupied a long time, and by that the last had crossed the foremost ones had strayed up-stream, down-stream and on to the heath, necessitating a fresh hunt and taking tally anew.

On this heath, which is called after the Flood-dale (*Fljótsdalsheiði*), *roches moutonnées* are seen peeping out here, there, and everywhere, and there are also huge boulders (*blocs perchés*) left by the glacier in its line of retreat from the sea towards the great south-eastern range, the *Vatnajökull*, where it had its birth, and where it still lives on in weakness and decrepi-

tude, a very shadow of its former self. From the heath we presently dropped into the verdure-clad Flood-dale and rode down to the ferry-steed on the *Lagarfljót*. The curious and interesting feature is a lake some five and twenty miles in length and of very varying breadth—from a few hundred yards up to a mile and a half. Following up this lake, we find it is fed at the southern end by two rivers, the *Keldud* (Well-water) coming from the Well-water lake, in the deserts around the foot of *Snæfell* (Snowfell) and the *Jökulsá* (Glacier-water), fed by the snows of the north-eastern spurs of the *Vatnajökull* (Lakes glacier) and by sundry small streams rising in the neighbouring desert. Perhaps the definition “lake” is incorrectly applied to the *Lagarfljót*: it seems to be rather a broadening though not a shallowing of the rivers above mentioned, and the Icelandic name *fljót* (flood) seems to bear out this latter view. With regard to the meaning of the prefix *Lagar*- I have the temerity to put forward a construction that runs counter to what has been said upon the subject by previous travellers. The young student who accompanied Captain Burton’s party (of whom I had the pleasure to be a member) in 1872, explained the name by supposing a corruption of *Laug*, a bath, especially used of a hot spring, where bathing was practised in olden times. More than one fact points to the fallacy of this rendering. In the first place there is no *laug* within a great many miles from any part of the Flood, at least none is shown on the map; and it must be considered extremely doubtful whether this muddy, cold stream should have been used for “bathing.” That wholesome operation was never performed save in warm water, and have we not all laughed at the proviso under which Christianity was accepted by the people, viz. that baptism should be effected with warm water? But besides this physical objection, there is an etymological bar to such a rendering, which would be sufficient to throw doubt upon it, even if there were a *laug* in the immediate vicinity—the distinct and peculiar pronunciation, very difficult of perception by foreigners, of the diphthong *au*, a vowel-sound that is never,



so far as I can find, exchanged for the open *a*. Another translation of the word that was given us was "layer"-flood, in fanciful reference to layers of ice and mud, which have no existence in reality. Here again is a fatal etymological stumbling-block. Supposing the name to be derived from *lag*, a layer, Hallormr of the Wilderness, or whoever bestowed the name, must have been weak in his declensions, for *lag* is a neuter noun, and there is no neuter noun in the language (unless it may be some foreign word of recent importation) which forms its genitive, either singular or plural, in *ar*. Supposing then that these objections are conclusively fatal to the two renderings before cited, what can be proposed in substitution for them? The recollection of several instances in which *a* and *á* are interchangeable, (thus: *hals*, *háls*; *malnr* *málmr*) in spelling, and of how often it is difficult to distinguish them in every-day conversation gave me the key-note to what I believe to be the true and proper explanation of the name. Rejecting *lag* and *laug*, I tried an obsolete noun, *lág*. This word signifies a felled tree or "log," and *Lágarfjót* would then mean Log-flood, an appellation which seems sufficiently warranted when we remember that on the shores of the Flood grows a *skógr* (shaw) or birch copse which is commonly considered the finest in Iceland. The word is still used in the plural, *lágar*, in the sense of a deep hollow place, such as that wherein the Flood lies, but *lág* (genitive *lágar*) appears preferable. At any rate it is easier to suppose the omission of an accent than of a letter, and the sense expressed is unquestionably in favour of the former.

We found the Log-flood so low that we dispensed with the services of the ferryman from *Rangá* (Wrong-water), and drove the ponies in pell-mell, following them on horseback. They straggled considerably, but none were forced to swim, and we men escaped with no greater inconvenience than having our breeches' pockets filled with muddy glacier-water. The scamper hence to *Eyðar* (Wastes) occupied but a few minutes, and at 6 o'clock our day's stage was finished, and we were able to dry our soaked nether garments. The

house here is certainly one of the best in Iceland, and the host is very accommodating, but he has somewhat expansive ideas on the subject of "reckonings," which may partly account for how he has been able to build so elegant a home on an income derived ostensibly from the "wastes" which he farms.

The bait was poor and scattered, and the ponies had to go far in search of it, so that though we turned out at 4 next morning, there was still a steed missing at the proposed hour of starting, 10.30. We induced the bonder to let us have another animal in exchange for the truant, who was sure to be ultimately found, and with much shouting and crackling of whips, we set off on the last stage of our journey. Wading the *Gilsá* (Gill-water), a deep though small stream, we pushed across the *Vestdalsheiði* (Westdale heath), a plateau with numerous little lakes lying in glaciated rock basins. The evidences of glaciation, were seen in the polish and scratching to which the hard solid basaltic rock, over which we rode, has been subjected; indications which here remain exceedingly well marked on account of the hardness of the rock itself and the absence of soft rocks in the vicinity, that by disintegration and distribution and subsequent vegetation, might have hidden every trace. As we near the verge of the elevated plateau we can scan the *Seyðisfjörður* (47) Seethe-firth), lying several thousand feet below us, and if the weather were not so misty, we might gaze far out upon the Atlantic. Slowly and cautiously we descend the slippery path, in many places steeper than a well-arranged staircase. A tiny force dashes down from terrace to terrace of the trap rock, and the way is sometimes on one side of it and sometimes on the other, twisting and twirling to avoid rock-buttresses and bits of perpendicular wall that are too much even for an Icelandic pony. By half-past one we are on the seashore. The steamer has not arrived, so we secure grazing ground for the ponies, and find lodgings for ourselves at the house of the chapman, Herra Sigurður (Jónsson), or at the guest-house, and here we have to kick our heels for two whole days.

On the third day the steamer arrived and the ponies were put on board. At noon on the morrow I left Seethe-firth with Stepi the Small, and riding pretty hard, reached Templeclose in good time for the night-meal between 8 and 9 p.m. Surtr cast a shoe in the night, but that matter was speedily remedied by my energetic host. He fetched out his box of tools, pared the hoof, fitted a shoe, made some nails out of a small rod of good soft iron which he had for the purpose, and shod my pony with all the smartness and address of a good English farrier. The smithy is an indispensable office at every farm of any pretensions at all, but the shoeing of a pony is, as a rule, a screaming farce, requiring the services of at least five able-bodied men. One holds the animal's head by means of a cord tied round the lower jaw and often, through brutal carelessness, half severing the poor creature's tongue; other three are told off to watch the legs on which the animal stands, while the fifth devotes himself to the shoeing. Nobody understands the art, but everybody offers advice, and a torrent of hideous whistling is kept up, which seems much better calculated to disturb than quiet the nerves of the patient as intended. But there is no such docile and tractable quadruped in existence as an Icelandic pony, and the only time when he gives way to little exhibitions of obstinacy is when he has become hungry and hot, and insists upon rolling in the sand with his saddle or load, as the case may be, performing for himself a species of curry-combing which is denied him by his human masters. But my esteemed friend Sir Thorvaldur, is one of those few, those very few priests whose character and acquirements win for them that respect and esteem which was almost universally accorded to the *prestar* of Henderson, the missionary's day. Mounted on Skuggi (Shadow), a magnificent silky-coated black ambler of whom he was very fond, he accompanied me to the next farm as a mark of friendly respect, and there we parted regretfully. I was much pained to receive a letter from him some months later, recounting the untimely death of poor Skuggi.

We had a cold and wet ride over the heath to Maddersdale, but the kindness of the good lady of the house and her graceful companion, the pretty Anna, soon made us oblivious of such trifles. Next day we started with the intention of reaching Guillemot-reeks, or at least Reeky-ledge, but on arriving at Grimurstead at 2.30, we found that the farmer had just crossed the Glacier-water before us, leaving the ferry-boat on the farther side of the river and imposing upon us the necessity of waiting here till some traveller should bring it back. During the evening one arrived and we started at 8 on the following morning. The ride across the *Mývatns-öræfi* (Midgewater-desert) was remarkable in this, that it introduced me to an animal which some had begun to think was as extinct as the Gare-fowl or the lava-haunting outlaw.

The day was piping hot, and we fared leisurely on our way across the broad wild desert, when I espied directly ahead of us an animal perched on the top of a *þúfa* and looking intently in our direction. I thought it to be a dog, and expected every moment to see a horseman, but as we drew nearer more appeared, and we then set them down as goats, strayed from Reeky-ledge. Not till we got within 150 yards of them did they begin to move and then, as the buck trotted out from behind a mound that had hidden him, we simultaneously whispered "*hreindýr* (107) (reindeer)!" The herd numbered seven, a buck, with splendid branching antlers, lagging behind the others, who were hornless. In size they appeared to be somewhat less than the ponies we rode, and in colour they were "piebald," irregularly patched with darkish brown and lighter shades. They must have been actually on the path when we first saw them, and they only trotted a few yards out of our way as we drew up. Having no better weapons than a strong whip and a leathern waist-belt, I saw no prospect of emulating the bonder on the Reeky-heath, but I could not resist the temptation of riding at them. Unfortunately the ground was exceedingly difficult, and within the first ten strides my off stirrup leather burst from the stitching, and got under my

pony's feet. We watched them till they dropped into a dell, out of sight. I made up my mind for a week in the wilderness by and by, but that was fated never to be, and I had to rest content with a sight only of this, the rarest creature in Iceland. Every one has heard the story of the introduction of this quadruped into the island about a century ago, and this needs no repetition, but much remains to be said about the animal. First of the name. That given above signifies "clean-deer," deer being applied to almost any animal; but this seems to be a corruption of the proper name *Hrein*, a word which is probably of Finnish origin. There are some passages which seem to point to the existence of this deer in the British Isles, but they are doubtful. Thus, though King Alfred speaks of it, he seems to have known the name only from Olthere's tale; and when in his poem on King Athelstân, Egil speaks of Northern England as *hreibrant*, it is probably meant poetically for a "wilderness," rather than literally "reindeer-track." A curious passage also occurs in the *Orkneyinga Saga* (Orkneymen's Saw), or Lives of the Earls of Orkney, where the hunting of reindeer in Caithness is recorded, but this must be a mistake of the Sagaman, for it is hardly likely that the Norsemen brought them across the sea on their forays; and no traces have been found to warrant credence in any of the stories of their existence in these isles. For the part which reindeer have played in leading to Arctic discoveries, I must refer the reader to Mr. James Lamont's entertaining volume "Yachting in the Arctic Seas,"<sup>3</sup> but in the meantime I shall presume to borrow a few lines from him, bearing on the subject of the migratory habits of these interesting animals. He says, "The instincts of this animal, as originally exhibited in both hemispheres, seem to be *migratory*; in spring vast herds follow up the melting of the snow in their progress northwards for pasture. In the autumn the first fall of snow drives them back to the *shelter and herbage of the northern limit of trees*. It may, therefore, be assumed that the existence of reindeer in Spitzbergen and Novaya Zemlya,

<sup>3</sup> London: Chatto and Windus, 1876.

and other isolated lands to be yet discovered, where ordinary yearly migration is difficult or impossible, is an accidental circumstance; in other words, that the reindeer is not indigenous to districts compelling him to the annual five months' starvation, which in a severe season might mean extinction." Do not the passages I have put in italics help to account for the unthriving condition of the Icelandic reindeer on the storm-swept, snow-covered, treeless heaths? Capt. Burton says, "The animals suffer severely from wet—hence Iceland proved anything but the expected paradise." Yet in Greenland, where the reindeer have flourished to such a degree that they have been slaughtered at the rate of 25,000 per annum,<sup>4</sup> the *rain-fall*, (not including snow), is far greater than that of Iceland,<sup>5</sup> and I may also point to the immense herds of reindeer that inhabit the quaking morasses of the Tundras in north-western Russia.

But to the path again. We reached Reeky-ledge at 2 p.m., spent a couple of hours in sipping milk and chocolate, and then four hours' easy ambling brought us to Guillemot-reeks, in time for supper. Two days later I rode to *Akureyri*, and was returning therefrom in the dead of night, when I nearly collided with a wayfarer on one of the heaths, it was so dark. We saluted and then each asked, "What are you hight?" My reply evoked the information that an English steamer lay in House-wick bay. This hurried me, and led to an incident that might have been serious. I had two loose horses and was anxious to change mounts, but could not steal up to the one I wanted. I then thought of overtaking him by galloping past in another rut, and was proceeding to do this, riding at full speed, when my horse turned a complete somersault with me. I was not hurt, but felt somewhat dazed, and could not immediately make out in which direction I had been going. The truant was caught and mounted at last, however, and reaching House-wick at 2 in the morning, I found true enough that a large steamer had come to

<sup>4</sup> Rink's "Danish Greenland," King and Co., 1877, pp. 101, 376.

<sup>5</sup> "Ultima Thule," Captain R. F. Burton, i. 65, 170.

fetch the ponies (*that had been shipped days before at Seethe-firth!*), and the brimstone. Besides her cargo of timber and coals, the "Mizpah," brought me two expensive but useless implements: the one was a cart, which, if not then rotten, will become useful about the time that Icelandic ways are laid with asphalte; the other, a heavy, narrow, tall construction of oak and iron, I was asked to consider a sledge; but it would be an insult to the designer to suppose that he ever intended it to be used as such, for it resembled nothing less.

As soon as the "Mizpah" had been laden and despatched, we brought everything movable from Guillemot-reeks, locked up the hut, and prepared to hibernate at House-wick.

## CHAPTER IX.

## SIX MONTHS' WINTER.

Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots,  
 Frae Maidenkirk to Johnny Groats',  
 If there's a hole in a' your coats,  
                   I rede ye tent it ;  
 A chiel's amang you takin' notes,  
                   An' faith he'll prent it !—*Burns.*

BEFORE launching out into the history of a long dreary winter-tide, it will be interesting to take a retrospective glance at Icelandic chronometry.

The distinction between day and night is so well marked as to be easily appreciated and recognized by the veriest savage, and thus we find these words in use among all Teutonic tribes from the earliest times. The darkness and dangers accompanying the night gave it a precedence in their heathen estimation over the bright and stirring day, and it was used by them in computing time, just as it is in Iceland at the present day. With us in England the night season was less significant and the day governs ; but still we have lingering traces of the same custom in such words as fortnight (fourteen nights), and sennight (seven nights).

The next great natural division of time was the year. In the very early heathen days the Scandinavian year was divided into seventy-two periods of five days each, known as *Fimts*, but these remained only in law terms after the introduction of the Christian calendar with its weeks of seven days each. The week seems to have taken root in Iceland earlier than in the other Scandinavian countries, and the *fimt* scarcely occurs in the laws of the former, though it seems very doubtful that the week was in recognized use during the heathen days of the island's history, though one authority affirms its existence in



the middle of the tenth century. In noticing the apparently anomalous absence of *fimts* from the laws of Iceland, we must remember that the laws were not committed to paper till the end of the eleventh century, by which time the term may easily have died out. Indeed, the word *vika* is not Scandinavian, but most probably derived from ecclesiastical Latin. It is a curious fact that the Icelanders are the only Teutonic people who have lost the old names of the weekdays. Bishop John, who died in 1121, forbade the use of the heathen names and substituted the ecclesiastical nomenclature. The ancient names of the months have survived, however, so that the almanac gives both them and the modern months side by side. Taking the calendar for 1876, they correspond as follows:—

I. January	I.	vi. <i>Mörsugr</i> (Marrow-sucker)	11.
"	21.	vii. <i>Þorri</i> , a mythical name	1.
II. February	I.	"	12.
"	20.	viii. <i>Góí</i> , a mythical name	1.
III. March	I.	"	11.
"	21.	ix. <i>Einmánuðr</i> (One month), the one remaining month of winter	1.
IV. April	I.	"	12.
"	20.	x. <i>Harpa</i> , <i>Gaukmánuðr</i> (Cuckoo month) or <i>Saðttíð</i> (Seed- tide)	1.
V. May	I.	"	12.
"	20.	xi. <i>Skerpla</i> , <i>Eggttíð</i> (Egg-tide) or <i>Stekktíð</i> (Fold tide) when the young lambs are weaned	1.
VI. June	I.	"	13.
"	19.	xii. <i>Sólmánuðr</i> (Sun month) or <i>Sel mánuðr</i> (Shieling month) when the cattle are taken out to the mountain pastures	1.

VII. July	1.	"	13
"	19.	<i>Aukanætur</i> (Eke nights)	1.
"	23.	i. <i>Heyannir</i> (Hay seasons). <i>Önn</i> , plu. <i>annir</i> , may perhaps be derived from Gothic <i>aþn</i> and <i>ataþni</i> = a year	1.
VIII. August	1.	"	10.
"	22.	ii. <i>Tvímánuður</i> (Twin-month)	1.
IX. September	1.	"	11.
"	21.	iii. <i>Haustmánuður</i> (Harvest- month), or <i>Garðlagsmánuður</i> (Garth-laying month)	1.
X. October	1.	"	11.
"	21.	iv. <i>Gormánuður</i> (Gore-month)	1.
XI. November	1.	"	12.
"	20.	v. <i>Freyrmánuður</i> (Frost-month) or <i>Ylir</i> (Howler)	1.
XII. December	1.	"	12.
"	20.	vi. <i>Mörsugr</i> (Marrow-sucker) or <i>Hrítmánuður</i> , (Rutting- month)	1.

In the old year there are, therefore, twelve months of thirty days each, four eke-nights being introduced between the Sun-month and the Hay-seasons. The remaining day and its fraction are collected into a week, which formerly was added to the summer of every sixth or seventh year, but is now inserted at every fifth or sixth year. It was first introduced by Thorstone the Black, and called *Sumar-auki* (Summer eke), in the tenth century. The year 1876 was leap-year, and fifth year after summer-eke. Again, the year is divided into summer and winter, twenty-six weeks in each, the first week of summer commencing on the first day of Cuckoo month or Seed-tide (April 20, 1876), and the first week of winter on the first of Gore-month (October 21, 1876). In all written and printed documents the dates are given in accordance with the Gregorian calendar, but among the country

bonders mention is hardly ever made of the modern months. Two only of the ancient months, *Þorri* and *Góí* (or *Góa*) now remain in popular usage, and the people commonly compute by the number of weeks of summer or winter, as the case may be, except during *Þorri* and *Góí*; or they date from a church feast, as so many days or weeks after Easter or Whitsuntide or Yule. It is very interesting to note that while the old months which marked special seasons, as Eggtime, Frost-month, &c., have dropped out of use and been replaced by weeks, the two mythical heathen months of *Þorri* and *Góí*, which were characterized by great sacrifices, still retain a strong hold in the memory of the people.

In Anglo-Saxon and in Icelandic the tale of days was reckoned by nights, and to this day among the Icelanders a child is said to be so many nights old, and not so many days. Just in the same way the years were and are counted by winters, a feature common to the Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, and Icelandic tongues. This practice will appear reasonable enough when we reflect that in all northern latitudes the winter is the season against which a defence has to be made, and when privation and suffering have to be endured, the more so the nearer we approach the Pole. The custom has been driven out of this country by the influences of civilization and the infusion of more southern ideas; but in Iceland the age of every creature, from man downwards, is still counted by winters.

The three days preceding the Gore-month, which ushers in winter, are known as the *Vetrnætr* (Winter nights), and in heathen days they were celebrated with great feasts and sacrifices. The month is so named from the great slaughtering of sheep which takes place at this season, after the *Réttir* have been concluded. In the good old days this slaying of fee was only destined to fill the owners' larders with salted or reeked *kjöt* (108) (meat) for winter use. But things are altered now; that portion of the flocks which is not bought by the Scotch fee-chapman is "raked" to the nearest cheapstead, there to be slaughtered, cut up and packed with

salt in barrels for transport to Copenhagen, its hardness making it unsaleable save as salt-junk for Danish sailors.

Thus the first two or three weeks of winter were employed in butchering, and more than an acre of field surrounding the cheapstead at Housewick was covered with knots of men and women decapitating and flaying their flocks. The heads, entrails and blood are carefully preserved by the bonders, whose property they remain ; the fleeces are pegged out to dry and sold to the chapman at prices varying with their size ; and the carcasses are then weighed, jointed, rubbed with coarse salt imported from England, and packed for shipment. A very small proportion, not five per cent., of the meat is withheld by the bonder, to be smoked, salted or pickled for home consumption at Yule and other festive seasons. The heads are singed over peat-fires kindled on the hearth, and afterwards pickled in a sour liquid ; the entrails or *slátr* (slaughter), together with the blood, are mixed with raisins and coarsely-chopped suet or *mör* (marrow), into a kind of black pudding known as *blóð-mör* (blood-marrow). During the slaughter-tide I used to get this black pudding for breakfast every morning at least, and sometimes for each meal of the day. When fresh and well-made, fried in butter, and eaten with moist sugar, it was not at all bad ; but when it had fermented and turned thoroughly sour, the stomach required fortification before commencing the attack. *Mör-fjandi* (Marrow-fiend) was a nickname often applied to Icelanders by the Norsemen on account of their living principally upon their flocks.

One of the most important duties of the Gore-month is the laying in of provisions to last through the winter. Pease, rye (for bread-making), coffee, sugar, and a little *brennivín* (corn-brandý) will be procured at the cheapstead, while for fish, *skyr*, and butter one must depend upon himself. I have known men so improvident as to have to buy back from the chapman at the end of winter the fish which they had sold him during the previous summer. It will be seen that the Icelander's wants are few and simple. Vegetables, properly

speaking, he hardly ever sees. Potatoes and hardy roots, such as Kohl-rabi, would grow everywhere with proper attention, though they might not attain to a great size nor ripen sufficiently (in the north) to give seed ; but there is an apathy and listlessness in the very breath of the people, a downcast resignation, as of a doomed race, and it is only here and there that one steps out of the beaten path which his forefathers have made for him, and grows a few rods of potatoes or kail. Raisins, prunes, and figs, all of detestable quality, are luxuries to be laid in only by the ounce, and to be used (especially the two former) in making sweet soup for auspicious occasions. Besides salt, which is somewhat sparingly used, the only condiment worthy of mention is sugar, for which everybody seems to have a craving, dictated probably by the climate. But even this is used in the most economical manner ; thus, instead of adding sugar to his coffee, the Iclander puts a knob of "candy" or "loaf" between his teeth, and drinks through it, leaving the sugar almost intact to remove the taste of the beverage ; or he swallows the liquid sugarless and afterwards sucks a scrap of candy. Tobacco I shall include here, for it is as great a necessity as the most important article of diet. Smoking-tobacco is not in request ; pipes and lights would need too much trouble and attention ever to become favourites. Snuff is universally taken by the old women, and few men will refuse a pinch, but the *pièce de résistance* is a black, pungent, odoriferous, repulsive preparation in the form of a thin rope, known as *munn tabak* (mouth tobacco), half an ell of which every man carries in his pocket, and which he cherishes as fondly as any old salt of our own shores cherishes his "quid." In this respect the Icelanders approach the Greenlanders, among whom the want of this narcotic is so severely felt that in times of scarcity the same quid has been made to serve all the members of a party in turn.

For my own part I endeavoured to supplement the above humble fare with a few delicacies, and this is how I succeeded. As I could not drink coffee, I tried to get tea, and as a great

favour I managed to collect six pounds of dried leaves which went by that name, but that was by dint of ransacking the stores of the cheapsteads that supplied as large a district as half the home counties of England. I luckily lighted, too, upon a little wheat flour, and discovered an abandoned packet of baking powder at the Apothecary's in *Akureyri*, which kept me in white bread for nearly a month. At the same old curiosity shop I disinterred from a heap of cobwebs a bottle of English pickles and a small pot of Cranberry jam, the latter of which I considered a prize at three shillings and sixpence. With a barrel of English potatoes I was not so fortunate, they all froze before I could get them into my cellar.

About the middle of October we were visited by an epidemic of mumps which, breaking out first upon the east coast, spread slowly but surely throughout the whole island. Some traced it to a Danish ship which entered *Eskifjörður* (Ash firth) late in the autumn, others thought it was brought by the Scotch fee-ship to Seethe-firth. It took a very virulent form and seldom confined its attacks to the necks of the victims, but flew to the breasts of the women and to still more delicate glands in the case of the men, causing extreme pain and prostration, sometimes rendering the patient unconscious, and proving fatal in more than one instance. At one time there could not be found in the whole district of which Housewick was the centre, sufficient able-bodied men to navigate a single four-oared fishing-boat, so general was the sickness. Several sufferers were attacked twice and even thrice in succession. Though situated, as one might say, between two doctors, the fact that one lived in the Weapon-firth and the other at *Akureyri*—either several days' journey distant—helped to make consultations of rare occurrence, and my small stock of domestic medicines was in considerable request. There was the more reason to regret this epidemic, as it caused the firth fishing to be neglected, just at a time when cod and haddock swarmed around the coast, so that each man of a boat's crew could easily earn ten or twelve shillings a night.

Almost to the end of October we were favoured with what the Icelanders call blithe weather. Occasionally there fell a sprinkling of snow and the night air was crisp, but a kindly sun soon dispersed these heralds of winter's approach, and left us to rejoice at our good fortune. Only last autumn (1878), as I learn from the Icelandic journals, men and sheep were buried in snow drifts before even the Harvest-month had set in.

On the evening of the 28th of October, my little parlour at Housewick, was the scene of a farce from Icelandic modern life which I shall not readily forget. The Provost, Sir B. K. of M. and the Rapesteerer (109) Herra Þ. M. of H. called on me to receive payment for the grass-land which I had rented of them at Guillemot-reeks. They were far from being innocent of potent libations when they arrived, but still had their wits about them sufficiently to transact the business on hand. This concluded, I offered each a glass of amber-coloured liquid, which was labeled "Sherry," but resembled that wine as little as it did the fine English mead, of which the old Vikings were so fond. Had I done less I should have been known as a nidding and a mean outlander (foreigner), and besides it would have been an insult to Provostial and Rape-steering heads to suppose that they could ever be affected by *one* additional glass. I took care, however, that the bottle—the age of decanters has not yet dawned in Iceland—should not be full, as I had a suspicion that these thirsty souls would respect the old rule of 'no heel-taps.' The flask was speedily drained to the last drop, and they rose to depart. His Reverence stood talking to me for a moment in school-boy Latin, and in that brief moment the Rapesteerer lost command of his own helm, and mistaking the coal-box for a chair, sat into it, and thereupon cumbered the floor with coals and his own big form. We put him on the sofa, but he was too far gone for sitting, and soon reached the floor again. Still the Provost held on with his Latin, and occasionally broke in with snatches of Danish and English, all of which I was bound to admire. Presently I missed the Rapesteerer,

and on searching we found that he had made his way out at the door and lay buried in a foot of snow hard by his pony's heels, for the unfortunate riding-horses of these inebriates had remained all this time tied to the fence without, in the full fury of the howling storm. Thus another delay was necessitated, while the half-frozen and fuddled Rapesteerer was being thawed before the stove.

In the meantime it had grown dark, and I tried to persuade them to seek shelter at the guest-house hard by, and not face the homeward ride of some thirty miles in such weather. The Provost's rejoinder was that he had to hold Divine-service on the morrow, and must on that account return. My thoughts strayed to the Wallachian peasants of Transylvania, who lock up their priest overnight, and do not release him till mass has been said on Sunday, lest he should be incapacitated by drink. 'Twas a cruel reflection, but I felt that the Icelanders with all their civilization might in this respect take a leaf from the book of those blind followers of the Greek faith. So at last the pair started, with an obstinacy that is only equalled by their own ponies under trying conditions, and with few sighs I prepared for supper. But I had hardly sat down when a violent rapping was heard at the front door. On opening it there stood the Provost. He had returned, he said, because he had lost his companion. I called my house-carls, and we sallied out into the darkness and the driving snowstorm in search of the missing Rapesteerer. After a long time we found him in a ditch, where he had fallen from his horse, stunned and bleeding fast from a cut across his forehead. The carls carried him to the guest-house and there left him, while his pony, with an amount of sense that did him great credit, ambled riderless home to H. Thus were we rid of one nuisance, but a greater remained. While we had been searching for the Rapesteerer, the Provost had been ransacking my larder, and on returning to the house we found him seated by the stove with a bottle of sherry, which he had decapitated and half emptied, in his hand. This finished, he asked for more, but not getting it he turned



to hunting the cook, and swore that he would carry her home with him by force. This only brought down upon him the laughter and jeers of the house-carls, for every one knew how mercilessly he was hen-pecked, a fate which in Iceland is ridiculed far more than among ourselves. At last he insisted upon fighting me to the death out in the snow and darkness, which kind invitation I declined, having respect rather for his office than his person. Finally, I left him, and pretended to go to bed, while the cook sought safety in another house; thus balked he took his departure at 3 o'clock in the morning and left me to finish my supper. He only reached the next farm, and there slept off the effects of his bout, pursuing his journey towards evening. His horse broke through the ice on the Laxwater, and both had a very narrow escape from drowning. Not until Monday afternoon did he reach the homestead of M., and the church-goers on the previous Sunday had ridden in vain to mass. I am glad to say that he felt ashamed of himself, and came afterwards to crave my pardon.

The whole episode seemed like a page from a saga of the old heathen days. It reminded me of the *Berserkir* (110) or Bearsarks, those wild Norse or Swedish champions who received their name from wearing bear-skins as their only armour, half-mythical heroes, who when the fit came upon them howled like wild beasts, foamed at the mouth, tore their helmets with their teeth and were, in popular superstition, at such times proof against fire and steel, dreadful when roused, but mild when appeased. Or rather, should I liken my unwelcome guest to those quasi Bearsarks or professional bullies, who roamed about Norway challenging honest bonders to holmgang, robbing and ravishing wherever they went.

The last outward mail for the year leaves *Akureyri* on the 9th November, and as Housewick does not lie in the track of the eastern postman, it is necessary to send letters to *Akureyri* by special messenger some time beforehand. Being anxious to try what winter travelling was like, I decided to be my own express, and set out at midday on the 5th, ac-

accompanied by Sveinbjörn (Swain-bear) one of my housecarls, and a pony laden with letters and parcels. I scarcely ever made a journey, however short, that I was not availed of by my neighbours for conveying letters and small parcels to farms by the way, a service I was always glad to perform, knowing the uncertainty of communication, and the little trust that was to be placed in the ordinary native wayfarer, who was sure to get drunk before he started, if it were humanly possible.

But little fortification against the weather was needed. Discarding boots, which would be too cold, too stiff, and too slippery on the ice, I followed my companion's example, and wore two pairs of thick woollen stockings, tucking the legs of my trousers into a third pair, after the fashion of schoolboys at "hare and hounds;" next came a pair of ordinary sealskin shoes, and over all, sheepskin fishing-stockings, which keep in the heat as well as they keep out wet. Fingerless gloves, two on each hand, were tied on under our wrist-bands, cat's fur lined caps reached from our eyes to our necks, and round the latter we bound serviceable scarves; blue dust-glasses for our eyes, and a couple of seven feet straight ashen poles, shod at one end with a steel spike, completed our equipment.

About a foot of snow covered the ground, and had drifted but little; the air was bright and clear, and the frost hard, but not hard enough, for it had only partially locked up the brooks and streams, which thus offered the only real impediment to our progress. Already at Laxmoor we were checked by the *Mýrakvísl* (Moor-fork), for while either bank was fringed with a selva of ice half a foot thick, in the middle there ran a deep stream of open water, too wide to be jumped. We found a spot where the ice spanned the whole stream, and remarked that a man on snowshoes had but lately darted across the treacherous bridge, but it would have been madness to take a horse on it, or even to walk on it. Swainbear's rede was to hack away with our staffs so much of the nearer ice shelf as would allow the pony to step into the stream, then to *tvímenna yfir ána* (two-men over the water), or cross the

river two on the horse's back at a time—an every-day's incident in Iceland—and trust to the steel spikes in his shoes for helping us up the other bank. The first and second parts of the programme were easily accomplished, but the last took some time about, and when at last the poor pony did get a foothold, he made such a desperate lunge as very nearly toppled us backwards into the stream. Pushing forward over the Coomb-heath, we crossed the Laxwater by bridge, and reached Greenedgestead at 6 in inky darkness.

Kind old Sir Magnus made us heartily welcome, and after a bountiful supper, washed down by endless bowls of new sheep's milk, we retired between the heaps of luxurious eider-down quilts which his fair daughter had arranged for us. Next morning we were off again as soon as it was fairly light—10 a.m. Rounding the Mull, we struck due south up the *Aðalreykjadalr* (Ethel [noble], or chief reek-dale), past the *Vestmannsvatn* (Westman's [Irishman's] water), and took the made road that runs up and down along the edge of the mull, in among a copse of stunted birch, willow, and juniper, drear and deserted now, but in summer a mass of fragrant verdure, and literally alive with shaw-thrushes (redwings) and *spóar* (whimbrels). Descending to the moors, we reached the Reekdale-water, another half frozen stream, but neither so deep nor so steep banked as the last. We crossed it in the orthodox manner, and then made across the fields in a straight line for Einarstead under the Floodheath. I thought we should never have done with the abominable *þúfur* that made the surface of the plain resemble a page's coat under the influence of a "favourable eruption of buttons." The snow hid all inequalities, and, worst of all, each mound was coated beneath with ice or *svell*, as it is called, to step on which meant slipping and burying one's self to the armpits in snow. Our procession must have looked like the antics of a party of Jacks-in-the-box, rather than plodding wayfarers, for it hardly ever happened that we all stood upright at the same moment.

At Einarstead we halted for a drink of milk, and to buy snow-shoes, in the making of which the bonder has a local

reputation. These are variously called *skíð*, a word related to the English "skid," and originally applied to a log or splint of wood, and *andrar* (? sing. *öndurr*), in all probability a Finnish word, and found only in Norway, where it is still in use, though the form *öndor* is common in Iceland in nicknames of the god *Ullr* and of the giantess *Skaði*, both represented as great runners on snowshoes. The Icelandic *skíð* resemble the snowshoes of the Finns and the Norsemen, and consist simply of well-seasoned strips of ash, six feet long, four inches wide, and half an inch thick, curved upwards at the toe, and carefully planed and polished on the under side to reduce friction. About midway small brass loops are fixed at the edges, into which are fastened thongs of green hide that hold the shoes on to the feet. They are heavy, cumbersome things, quite useless in going up an incline, for the Icelanders either have never learnt or have forgotten how to make the shoe cling by covering it with hide, laid so that the hair slopes from toe to heel. On level snow they make travelling easy, and by their aid a man may cross ice that would not support a dog. Downhill an adept will rush on them like the wind, so that nothing but a cloud of snow-dust is visible around him; and wonderful stories are told of men dropping over deep precipices without losing their shoes or breaking the run. But like skating, snow-shoeing needs some practice, and the novice will find it easier to go ahead of his shoes or to let them get ahead of him than to maintain a rigid perpendicular. In the south of Iceland they are almost unknown, and only in the north-eastern districts are they used to any extent.

Setting out again from Einarstead, dragging our shoes by cords from our belts, we clomb the Flood-heath. We promised ourselves a fine slide down the western face of the heath to the Shivering-flood, but the snow was disappointingly patchy, and many a lava boulder showed its black crest above the surface, so that we were fain to proceed slowly and cautiously. We took the stream at the usual wade just south of the *Þingey* (Thing island), a sandy islet where the local parliament used formerly to meet, and which may still bear traces of ruined

temple or deserted howe. The ice was not so thick here, but the flood was broad and deep, so while I piloted the nag across, Swainbear committed himself to the ferry-boat. After scrambling through the lava beds which have helped to create the Godsforce, we two-men'd over the *Djúpa* (Deep-water), skirted the Light-water lake and entered the Light-water pass. Here again, contrary to our hopes, the snow was so patchy and uneven that faring on skids was impossible, and as they got between our feet and bumped our heels in the ever-waxing dimness we felt sorry we had brought them. The baying of hounds was welcome music as we neared *Háls* (Hause), and found ourselves just in time for the night meal.

With a bright and cloudless morning we were able to start at 9, leaving our skids behind as a delusion and a snare. Wading the *Fnjóská* (Touchwood-water) was no easy matter on account of the thick and broad selvage of ice and the very steep banks that border the river. We had to call the ferryman and his cockle-shell to our aid at last, and patience surmounted the difficulty. Straight up from our feet rose the Vaadle-heath, an almost sheer 2000 feet of snow and ice. Avoiding the crooked Thingmensway that leads to the wade over the Islefirth, we scrambled up by what is known as the winter-way, but which is in reality no way at all, only a line of beacons being erected just to keep the wayfarer from steering to the wrong point of the compass. It was slow and tedious work, especially for our four-footed companion, who snorted and groaned many an objection. We crossed the plateau where snow patch alternated with green fen, and proceeded to descend the first of the two steppes on the firthward side. For my part I found this far more arduous than the ascent had been. The sun, and the mild breeze that rippled the waters of the firth, had thawed just enough of the frozen surface to cover it with a slimy coating as slippery as glass, and thus to render walking quite impossible. We did not attempt it in fact; I slid, the pony slid, we all slid, the only distinction between us being that while the others slid on their feet, I had an unaccountable leaning for performing my part

on my back, without any regard as to whether my head or my heels were foremost. We slid at last to the door of the little *bær* that stands on the banks of *Geldingsá* (Gelding or Wether-water) and takes its name from it. Here I hired the needy but industrious bonder, who is blessed with the largest stock of olive branches I have ever seen in Iceland, to row me and the saddle-bags across the firth, while Swainbear followed up the firth to the head and took the pony across the river wherever he could find ice that would bear. Then the bonder and I slid away down to the shore, pulled out the boat, caulked the scupper-hole, shipped the tholes, and rowed like Vikings against the stream and tide. We could not land at the jetties of the cheapstead for shore-ice, but made the land further seawards. Here the sandy beach shelved out so far that we ran aground yards from *terra firma*, but the hardy bonder sprang into the cold water up to his waist, and bore me off on his shoulders. The honest carl's face reddened for shame when I thrust a double fee into his hand. Altogether I must have employed him on at least a dozen flittings across the firth, most of them performed at dead of night, and I always found him willing and trusty. I remember coming over the heath one autumn night, when the fog and darkness combined made the path and every object so invisible that I only succeeded in finding the farm by striking the rivulet that ripples past it and wading down the bed. Still he made no demur—though turned out of his bed into the cold, clammy night air. I should have hesitated about the journey myself, but that a young lady had put herself under my charge on the assurance that I should reach *Akureyri* by a certain hour, and I would not cry off.

A couple of days were spent in letter-writing at old Jensen's excellent guest-house. The postman came and departed, and once more we set out on our way, having left the pony at its destination. Hearty, handsome Magnús (Jónsson), in his younger days skipper of a shark-fisher, now chief pilot of the port of *Akureyri*, and whose daughter was our cook at Guillemot-reeks, came to ferry us over the firth as we left the cheap-

stead. The frost had been unceasing during our stay, and climbing over the Vaadle-heath was thus rendered comparatively easy. We reached *Háls* again at 7 p.m., and accepted Sir Olave's kind invitation to sup and spend the night with him. The guest-room into which we were ushered possessed neither stove nor double windows, and sundry chinks in the woodwork of the casements admitted not only frost and wind, but a sprinkling of snow-powder as well. The thermometer (Fahr.) stood at zero in the room, and walls, ceiling, and furniture were coated with hoar-frost nearly an inch thick. Here we paced up and down till night-meal came, and shivered as the cold penetrated to our nether garments, wet as they were with perspiration. As soon as the night-meal was over we lost no time in burying ourselves under the eider-down coverlets that marked a small recess as the guest-bed. We shared it of course for the sake of extra warmth.

Next morning at *hirðis-rismál* (111) (herdsman's rising-meal) or 6 o'clock, chocolate and pancakes were brought to us while we still lay in bed, by Olave (mas. *Ólafr*, fem. *Óláf*) the comely young housewife. Washing water followed while we did justice to the refreshments, but it had scarcely been set down before it was covered with thin ice. Dressing was got through as speedily as possible, and then we kept up another devil's tattoo till the day meal made its appearance. This demolished, and our kind hosts rewarded, we set off at 9, while it was still dark, dragging our skids at our heels. In the Lightwater pass the snow was frozen so hard that it took no impression from our footsteps, and we kept up a steady trot till we came to the bank of the Deepwater. Here we were checked; search as we would up stream and down, we could find no ice bridge and no spot suitable for pole-jumping. It was evident that wading would have to be resorted to—*wading*, with the thermometer at zero. Nothing daunted, Swainbear hitched up his *brækr* (breeks) and took me on his shoulders, remarking that it was better one should get wet than both, and that the extra weight would better enable him to withstand the force of the stream. We chipped

away the brink ice so as to have a fair start, and advanced cautiously. As my bearer stepped in the water reached half-way to his knees, in a few paces it was above them, and ere we reached the middle of the stream it topped his belt, filled his coat-pockets and washed his elbows. But the sturdy carl did not even draw short breaths in his awfully cold bath, he ploughed through it like Grettir through the Islefirth-water in Bard-dale (only a few miles south of the very spot where we were), when he bore the good-wife of Sandhowes and her little daughter to mass at Yule-eve. With a laugh and a good shake he started off at a run, while his outer garments froze on him like boards.

I thought this a mete occasion for renewing an extinct mediæval custom, and surnamed Swainbear the Wader. Among the ancient Scandinavians and Teutons surnames were unknown; the child received a proper name either simple or compound, and underwent at the same time a kind of heathen baptism, being sprinkled with water, but without the presence of a priest. This rite is attributed even to Odin in one of the oldest mythological didactic poems on record, the *Hávamál* (112) (High's sayings) or Sayings of Ódin the High, and is mentioned in many Sagas from Iceland, Norway, and Orkney down to the latest centuries of the heathen age, and is designated by a special verb *ausa* (to sprinkle), not found either in Gothic or German, while the Christian term is *skíra* (Ulphilas, *skeirjan*), a translation of the Anglo-Saxon *fullian* = to cleanse. Later on, however, and probably through contact with foreigners, such as the Gaelic tribes of the west, eke-names became very common and abounded in Iceland at the time when the *Landnámabók* (Landtaking Book) or Book of the Settlement of Iceland was compiled, say about 1100, a date that accords very closely with the development of the custom of taking surnames in this country. In Iceland the eke-name seems to have referred generally to some quality or special deed of the person named, while in England, where all races commenced to adopt family or surnames about 1000, much variety of origin



is seen. It is interesting to note the predilections of the three principal peoples who inhabited England at that time—Saxons, Celts, and Jews—in the selection of their surnames. Personal names were most persistently used by the Jews, and but little by the other races. Names derived from places were common to both Saxons and Celts. Occupations and inanimate objects gave rise to names that were monopolized exclusively by the Saxons; those indicating qualities became as essentially Celtic, and those denoting animals were appropriated without exception by the Jews. Finally, names arising from titles were equally distributed among Saxons and Celts. When bestowing an eke-name in Iceland it was customary to confer a gift upon the person, which was called a *nafn-festr*, or name fastening. A great desire was shown by the ancients to live again in a new name. After a time, however, eke-names got into disuse, and the law made it an offence punishable with outlawry to "give names." At the present day very few family names exist in Iceland. The boy or girl is christened with a single name, but for distinction sake is known as so-and-so's son or daughter, which I have tried to emphasize in this volume by putting such names in brackets—thus Jón (Jóns-son), Ólöf (Björns-dóttir); and these names are not destroyed by marriage in the case of either sex. Another common way of distinguishing bonders is to state their residence, as *Pétur á Reykjahlfið*, *Arni á Skörðum*.

The scamper over the lava beds to the Shivering-flood helped to warm us a little, but none too much. Icicles hung from our eyes and joined our moustachios, beards, caps, and scarves in one mass of glistening white, and I feared for frost-bite in my companion's extremities. The ferryman from *Fljótsbakki* (Flood bank) soon heard our shouts, and we kept up a furious double-shuffle to help the blood through our veins. Ferrying was no easy task, not only on account of the broad selvages of bank ice that edged the stream, but also because of unceasing packs of loose ice that floated by with the flood. Had we come half an hour later we could not have crossed, and as it was the boat

barely escaped being frozen fast in mid-channel. Again we set off at a spanking pace over the Flood-heath, but nowhere were we able to take advantage of our skids. In the Ethel-reekdale the þúfur sorely troubled us, as before, and we made slow and painful progress to *Vatnshlíð* (Water-ledge) on the shores of the Westmans-water. Thence to Greenedgestead we fared better, and arrived at 4.30, just as dimness was wrapping the landscape in its impenetrable folds.

Here we wasted an hour on refreshments, which made us feel so game again that we began chaffing each other about going on at once to *Húsavík*. Chaff led to a challenge which was at once accepted, and to the consternation of everybody we resumed our frozen over-clothes, and darted off again into the gloom. Passing over the Laxwater by the bridge, which I believe we should never have found but that the white wood had not been painted, we went home to the nearest "by" to "speer" after the state of the Moor-fork and where it might be passable. Contrary to our hopes, we were assured that we must make a long "crook" by the *Reykjakverfi* (Reek-village) way over the Coomb-heath in order to strike the troublesome stream at a point where the ice was likely to bear us. The snow was shallow, the darkness intense, and everything frozen as hard as iron, so that in spite of lifting our feet as if we were mounting a staircase, we were constantly dashing them against obstructions. Aurora flickered faintly for about an hour, but only served to show the depth of the darkness. Later on we were astonished by two very bright flashes of lightning, but no thunder was audible. There is a Scandinavian proverb which says, "Winter thunder is the world's wonder," and Dr. Dasent has charmingly narrated<sup>1</sup> what consternation was wrought in Earl Sigvald's host by the thunderstorm that broke over the land-locked Hjöringsvøe on that memorable November afternoon in 994 A.D., when the Vikings of Jónsborg, some ten thousand strong, tried to redeem the vows they had made in their cups to pull down Earl Hacon from the throne of Norway. But

<sup>1</sup> "The Vikings of the Baltic," 1875. (Chapman and Hall, Piccadilly.)

in Iceland, as also in Færoe, winter is the season of thunderstorms. Captain Burton is my authority for saying that of 111 such storms recorded in Iceland during twenty-three years, about one quarter occurred in December, and another quarter in January, and he accounts for it by supposing that when the peaks are bare, electricity is equally distributed; but when they are covered with snow, a bad conductor, the local congestion relieves itself by discharges. I remarked this as the only occasion, during my residence of twelve months in the island, when I witnessed a display of the kind, and on two previous summer visits (1872, 1875), from June to September inclusive, I saw no sign of such.

We could scarcely make out the Moor-fork even when we stood on its bank, and had to judge of the condition of the ice by rapping it with the butt-ends of our ice-staffs. The sound was unpleasantly hollow, and we tried, but in vain, for a better place; in the broad shallows the broken water had resisted the frost, it was only in the deep, quiet reaches that the ice spread from bank to bank, and even there it was thin enough. However, we must make a try, or agree to spend the night on the bank, and the cold very soon decided us to make a try. We were afraid to take it at a rush on our skids, lest we might accidentally trip against some invisible obstacle and fall, which would almost certainly be the means of giving us a cold bath. A similar objection applied to walking over, besides which we were by no means sure that the ice was stout enough to bear our weight when concentrated upon the space covered by one foot. There was no 'rede' left us then but to sprawl across on our stomachs; taking our skids in either hand and lying as flat as possible, we grovelled slowly and nervously on, thrusting our ice-staffs ahead of us from our shoulders to act in some sort as feelers. The ice cracked and groaned ominously, and we were too far apart to see anything of each other, but the excitement, and the wetting we got from the water that spirted up in all directions, made us go all the merrier when we could stand on our feet again. On, on we stumbled over the rough, hard ground,

pole-jumping a little gurgling brook that drains the *Uxahver* (Ox-spring), and was steaming furiously even at this distance from its source.

As we had hoped, the home-folk at Thwartwater had not retired for the night when we arrived, for it chanced to be a saint's day, and the customary *hús-lestr* (house-lesson) or family prayers had not concluded. Swainbear jumped on the roof, shouted a blessing through the window, told his name, his father's name, his home and destination, and asked where and how were best to cross the river from which the 'by' takes its name. He received a blessing in return, then the information desired, and, uttering more blessings on each side, we set off to find the stepping-stones that were to carry us over the torrent. We found them sure enough, but, so far as we could judge in the darkness, about a foot and a half of water rushed over them, and every thing around was coated with the frozen splashings of the foaming little rapid. But there was no alternative, and we were nearing home, so in we went up to the knees, shuddering and scrambling like a puppy in his first bath, as the icy cold liquid found its way through the holes we had worn in our shoes. Only one trifling rivulet now remained in our path, and a couple of hours' more toil brought us to House-wick at 1.30 a.m. We had been sixteen and a half hours on the road, broken by but one hour's rest at Greenedgestead, and had covered thirty-six to forty direct miles (to which a liberal addition must be made for sinuosities), besides having to put up with delays and wettings at every stream, inky darkness the most of the way and a biting frost all the way. We went supperless to bed, and needed, as may be supposed, but little rocking. My feet were very tender next day, from the effects of the hard ground through worn-out foot-gear, but otherwise my condition was perfect. Poor Swainbear's wade through the Deepwater, however, laid him open to an attack of the mumps, from which he suffered very severely for some days.

The frost held out but a short time, and the latter half of the week in which we returned home was marked by heavy

rain each day. On the 19th the temperature sank sufficiently to convert the rain into snow, and during the remainder of the month we got a taste of almost every sort of weather by turns, snow, frost, sleet, rain, and heavy gales which blew from the north, from the east, and from the south at different times. The 24th was conspicuous for the most magnificent sunset I ever saw, even in this land of beautiful sky-scapes. At about 2 o'clock in the afternoon the sky, which appeared unusually lofty, was in a perfect blaze of gorgeous light, varying from blood orange to gold in every imaginable intervening tint, and gradually fading into purples of the richest hue. The air was still as death, and all nature seemed locked in the cold embrace of the biting frost that just then prevailed. The purity of the atmosphere, the distinctness with which distant objects were visible, and the marvellous, entrancing play of lights and shades on the snow-capped hills and bare black pinnacles around combined to form a picture that could not be matched in Europe, and scarcely in the East.

The mildness of the season tempted a party of fishermen from *Grimsey* (Grimur's-isle) to visit our cheapstead. These hardy fellows had to pull a good five and thirty miles over the open sea in a small undecked boat, with never a shelter to run to in case of bad weather, and he would be a bold man who should say when bad weather might not be expected in the last days of November. It showed that there is still something of the old blood and bone and sinew in these isolated *Grims-eyingar*, leading a life of desolation on that barren rock lying across the Arctic Circle, for even the Vikings of classic story, whose voyages we admire so much, made it a standing rule to be home before the first winter night (in October), and their ships were far stouter and better than the modern Icelandic fishing-boat. They spent an evening with my men in the long room, playing whist and chess, favourite Icelandic winter games, in the latter of which particularly they show considerable proficiency. I was not a little astonished at being addressed by their skipper in very decent sailor's English, which he told me he had picked up from the Grimsby

fishermen who frequent the waters around the island every year in quest of cod, haddock, and halibut. One poor fellow begged me to treat him for jaundice, which had got a terrible hold on him; but what could I do or advise when I knew that fresh meat, vegetables, and milk were utter strangers to the islanders even at summertime, and far more so in winter, and when the very breath of the men and the smell that escaped from every pore of their skins, proclaimed their diet to be sea-fowl and sea-fowls' eggs, with an occasional fish as a luxury. So permeating and tenacious was the odour, that it was perceptible in the room for several days afterwards. Having laden their boat with provisions, they left the bay towards midnight, every man of them so drunk that he could not stand upright. In the early morning the wind got up very strong, and was accompanied by a thick fall of snow, so that we felt sure they must have been lost. But the disturbance of the elements was evidently local, and the storm was attracted by the peaks of the great headland that forms the western jaw of the Shivering (bay), so that they got beyond its influence, for I met the same men some months later at *Akureyri*, and they assured me that their passage had been favourable.

I have now to tell of an incident, small perhaps in its way, but still one which did infinite credit to its young originators; a deputation came to ask me whether I would devote an hour or two each evening to giving lessons in English to those who had time and inclination for the study. I received the proposition with unmixed pleasure, and entered at once very cordially into the scheme, for not only did I see in it a most opportune occasion for improving my knowledge of Icelandic, but I was charmed at the enterprising spirit that lay at the bottom of it, and felt perhaps a little proud in helping to spread an acquaintance with the language which is already the mother-tongue of half the civilized world; a language which philologically is as interesting to the Icelandic as Icelandic is to us, and commercially and practically far more so. It were hard to limit the amount of trial and trouble

that would have been spared those three hundred Icelandic pilgrims, who 'flitted' themselves to the shores of Lake Winnipeg some years since, by even a smattering of English. Halldór Briem's excellent *Kenslubbók* was our only manual, and right diligent were the students. They assembled in my room every evening from six till ten, the first two hours being occupied with hard study, the last two with card playing, which, while innocent and amusing, gave many a chance of picking up a word or engraving it upon the mind, and offered an additional inducement to those who had to turn out in bad weather. Foremost among the scholars for acute perception and retentive memory was a little lad of fourteen summers named Einar, only son of my learned, devoted, and persecuted friend, Benedikt (Sveinsson), the *Sýslumaður* of the county, and who possessed in a large degree the brain power and wit of his eminent father. Excellent progress was made by three of the gentler sex, Kristjana the Fair (our cook and housekeeper), Ninna the Neat, and Guðrun the Hasty (wife of the Bear), while at the bottom of the list stood Olave the Lazy and Stepi the Small.

The three last days of November and the opening week of December showed us some real wintry weather, frost and snow unceasing. On the 3rd of the latter month the cold in my bedroom was such that the moisture from my breath condensed and congealed on my whiskers and the bed coverlet, thus freezing them together, and the water brought for me to wash in became coated with ice as thick as a shilling during the few moments I employed in getting into my breeks. In spite of a roaring fire in the stove that filled a corner of my little sitting-room, the windows were coated with thick ice inside and out so as to be completely opaque. The 11th was ushered in with a thaw (*hláka*), and as the day wore on the wind grew exceedingly high. At about 6 o'clock in the evening we experienced a mild earthquake, accompanied by most horrid low rumbling noises under our feet. Later the wind increased still further, and that combined with the earthquake made many people nervous for their safety, especially

as they remembered the earthquake of May, 1872, which ruined shelves full of crockery at *Akureyri*, and toppled half the turf huts around House-wick to the ground. In the morning there was much to bear witness to the fury of the gale. Boards had been ripped off the corn store, and rye and peas covered the ground in all directions ; Herra Guðjohnson's boat, weighing some tons, had been lifted bodily out of its place ; a huge baulk of timber some seventy feet long, and eighteen inches square, part of the dismantled jetty, had been rolled over the brink of a slope and along the sea-shore, while stones as large as bullets, and some equal to walnuts were piled up in heaps near corners round which the wind had eddied, and dust filled the air of the rooms as if carpet-beating had just been conducted indoors.

During the first half of December, I often went out with my gun, though the light was abominably bad for shooting, a kind of fitful twilight, while the ground was covered with pure white snow, and the game I sought was as white as the snow itself. Principal, because most numerous, were ptarmigan. These beautiful birds, so careless of their safety in summer, become very wary when the land is clothed in white, and never frequent the neighbourhood of houses as in adjacent Greenland. Their favourite haunts are the slopes of little valleys lying up among the hills, where the wind has removed the snow sufficiently to enable them to reach the berries of the stunted juniper and other hardy shrubs, without rendering the ground so bare that their white bodies would become conspicuous objects to the sportsman or the watchful falcon. When danger approaches they lie remarkably close, quite buried in the snow, and their spotless garb, a mass of delicate white feathers reaching to their very toes, increases the difficulty of discovering their whereabouts. But unfortunately for them, they are afflicted with a passion for chattering, which often leads to disastrous consequences. Having spent many a winter's night in wild-fowl punting on the Test, and been accustomed to listen intently for the "charm" of unsuspecting ducks, I followed the same plan now, and my ear often led



me to birds that I did not see till they took wing. Like all foreigners, the Icelanders could not imagine why I always drove up the game before I fired at it, that seemed to them a most unaccountable proceeding. In an impoverished country like Iceland there is nothing to induce the growth of a pure sporting spirit, a man comes to look upon every creature as worth so much for food or raiment, and thus takes what he considers the surest and shortest road towards bagging it. I saw no springes used for catching ptarmigan during my residence in the island, but the winter was too mild, and the birds therefore scarce; in hard winters considerable numbers are taken in that way. Those which fall to the lot of the natives are taken to the cheapstead and sold, but never hardly eaten by them, not because of any objection fancied or real, but simply from the fact that they are considered a luxury, and it pays better to get their worth in peas, rye, or coffee. For transport to Copenhagen they are wrapped in paper and packed with salt in barrels, and are said to keep well in that way. The meat is perfection in flavour, grain, and tenderness.

Concerning other species of fowl there is little to be said. Besides ptarmigan, the only land birds that do not leave the island before October closes in are the Icelandic raven, the snow-bunting, and the Iceland falcon, none of them ranking as game. A variety of water-fowl frequent the pools and brooks that are kept open by hot springs, such as the north-east corner of the Midge-water, and some spots around the bay on which House-wick stands, but they require a deal of watching for, offer very uncertain shots, and are almost impossible to recover when only winged, except by the aid of a dog. Sea-fowl visited us even less; they had all departed for warmer climes, and I do not remember having seen one all the winter. In the autumn they swarmed, and I might have filled my larder with them, and who knows, but that like my friend Watts of *Vatna-jökull* fame, I might have been led to fancying Guillemots "the nicest birds I had ever tasted in Iceland," had they only been introduced to me under their

seductive and reassuring native name *Svartfugl* (Swart-fowl or Blackbird). But I tremble to think of it when I remember the dreadful smell that pervaded those *Grimsey* fishermen, and reflect that it all came of eating "Blackbirds."

Reynard the Fox gives many an hour's sport to the natives. Poor Reynard, not a traveller but has libelled him in some way; one says that he lives on grass, another asserts that he is of two kinds, wild and tame—a distinction laughed at by everybody to whom I mentioned it; others yet give him almost as many colours as the chameleon, dark-red, black, blue, white, and sooty-brown. In point of fact, there are two kinds of foxes in Iceland, whose chief, if not only, distinction, is that one variety have white pelts and the other "blue." These varieties correspond exactly with those of Greenland, from which country there is very little reason to doubt Iceland was first colonized with foxes, as the proximity of the coasts, the set of the ice and the habits of the animals would render it an easy matter for stray individuals to be floated thither against their will. Any argument based on the fact that no man has yet found a white cub may be lightly disposed of, for a blue cub is equally unknown. All the cub-skins I have seen, about thirty, had very much the appearance of the ordinary English wild rabbit, with these exceptions, that the hair was much longer, and that generally a crucifix of darker colour fitted the backbone and shoulders. As in Greenland, a certain number are caught every winter in traps of primitive construction, but most of them fall to the gun.<sup>2</sup>

Having received, when last at *Akureyri*, numerous invitations to join in the festivities of Yule, I thought I could not do better than accept them, and accordingly prepared for a timely start to the principal northern cheapstead. Kristjana and Guðrun, having parents and friends there, asked to go also, so that it became necessary to take a pony laden with clothes and other articles inseparable from feminine existence, and a man to assist with the said pony. Unfortunately Olave the Lazy was almost the only carl in the place who

<sup>2</sup> See the *Field*, Jan. 4th and 11th, 1879.

had recovered from the mumps, as he had been one of the first to suffer, and on him my choice perforce fell.

Though the frost was broken at intervals by thaw just in the neighbourhood of House-wick, where the higher temperature of the sea made itself felt, we had no reason to suspect any such degree of wet on our journey as would require skin-socks, and our dress, as far as our legs and feet were concerned, underwent a slight modification. Instead of the skin-socks we all wore long and very coarse woollen fishermen's stockings, to which woollen soles had been knitted nearly half an inch thick—an admirable substitute for boots. The women used similar foot-gear, and bound their petticoats above the knee, so as not to be impeded by them in walking. Thus attired we set out at 2 o'clock on Sunday, the 17th of December, in fine, clear, frosty weather.

We thought it a good "rede" to make a short march on the first day for the sake of our female companions, and Laxmoor was therefore made the limit of the stage. Here we arrived at nightfall, and were welcomed in a manner becoming a friend and the owner of the best bonder's house in the island. I was anxious for an early start on the morrow, but in spite of my long training I had forgotten the importance attached to the Icelandic breakfast, *dag-verður* or *dögurður* (day meal). The old Scandinavians possessed strong stomachs and sound heads, and with them two meals per diem sufficed, breakfast taken at the *dagmál* (day meal) watch, or about 9 o'clock a.m., and supper at the *náttmál* (night meal) watch, or 9 o'clock p.m., after which the night was given up to carousal till bed-time. Of these two meals breakfast was considerably the more important, and approached the character of a modern English dinner in respect to the amount of eatables that were consumed; it was in fact the meal for *eating*, as opposed to supper, the meal for *drinking*. An early meal and a hearty meal were synonymous terms, and though these old heroes rose early, they never proceeded to any real work until they had breakfasted, employing the interim probably in light labour sufficient to bring back an

appetite after the debauch of the previous night. Even Odin in the *Hávamál* descends to the subject, and advises men to go to the meeting washed and "with full stomach," but not to mind how bad their dress, shoes, or horse may be; and repeats the sound advice to take an early meal, even before visiting a friend. So important a factor in every-day life was it considered, that several places in Iceland were named from the settlers having taken their first breakfast there, as Day-meal-ness, Daymeal-water, &c. It still remains the chief meal in Iceland, and is by no means unimportant among ourselves in that part of England where Norse influence has been greatest. The habit I had got into of travelling, eating, and sleeping at any hour that suited my convenience best, had made me careless about a heavy breakfast, but he who wishes to traverse Iceland with comfort to himself and justice to his guides and ponies will do well to bear this fact in mind, and not to care much at what hour he makes a morning start, so that he and his can set off "with full stomachs," for he may and generally will find it a far cry to supper-time. The guides and ponies too are unused to early starting, and if compelled to go before their appetites are sated, they will resent the imposition by causing endless delays by the way. Regarding an "early start" as the first law of travel, I could never rid myself of it, but that is only one of the rules that misapply in this anomalous country. +

Sigrjón (Victory John), the bonder at Laxmoor, kindly lent us assistance in men and horses for fording the Moorfork, which was still open. The Laxwater, on the other hand, was covered with thick ice on the broads above the farm, where the eider ducks swarm at summer-time. It was here that we proposed crossing the stream, for whereas during thaw and warm weather the wayfarer must follow the route where ford, ferry, or bridge will help him over the rivers, in winter, with King Frost's assistance, he can set all these at defiance, and only mountains need affect the course he must pursue. The ice on the Laxwater was anything but safe, however; in every direction were suspicious-looking domes forced up by the pressure of the water

beneath, as the river flowed rapidly and noisily above and below these shallows, where the frost has obtained a temporary command. Cautiously and slowly we picked our way among the dangerous spots that studded the hundred yards or more of treacherous crystal that joined the banks, and we were still within earshot when a tremendous crashing and roaring told us of the mastery of the waters and the destruction of our late bridge.

Winding through a part of the lava beds, which follow in one unbroken stream the Laxwater from its birth-place, the Midge-lake, and occupy a great portion of its own course, we called at *Knúttstaðir* (Canute-stead) for a drink of milk, and continuing through the same class of country, much of which lies below the level of the Laxwater, and is very subject to floods, we halted for a few minutes at *Tjörnu* (Tarn). Hence we struck due west across the lava, skimmed over a frozen lakelet, and wound around the northern spur of the Flood-heath, then headed south-west over broad grass-fields till we reached *Húsabakki* (House-bank). Here we procured a nibble of hay for our nag, and sat meanwhile on boxes in the dirt-floored entrance-hall, taking prodigious draughts at the bowls of delicious new milk that were brought us. The cold, dry air in these latitudes provokes a thirst as unquenchable as that of the hottest summer's day, and to a great extent destroys the appetite for food.

Turning our backs on House-bank, we trudged over the tussocky, snow-hidden grass till we reached the Shivering-flood. What a contrast between the appearance it presented now and when I had last seen it! Then it was a roaring, rushing river, hurrying away to the sea, bearing ice floes innumerable on its bosom, and rolling the stones along its bed; now it lay silent and still as death, a sleeping monster, winding snake-like through the valley, and hardly distinguishable from the snowy fields around. We jumped on the vanquished enemy with delight, we prodded him viciously with our ice-staffs, and listened to hear if he gave any sign of life, but the frost seemed to have penetrated through his whole body, and not a ripple, not a gurgle, not even a crack or snick in

the ice was audible. We filed joyfully across in a spot where sand islets split the channel into three arms without any of the trepidation and misgiving which had characterized our passage of the Laxwater a few hours before. The apparent anomaly that one river should be tearing itself free from its ice bonds at a moment when a second stream of greater volume, emptying into the same bay and not five miles distant at the nearest point is frozen through to the very bed, is easily explained. The Laxwater flows from the Midge-lake, in which are many boiling springs that cannot fail to influence the temperature of the water in some degree; its bed, too, is composed throughout of lava, whose projections and irregularities keep the waters in a constant turmoil, which renders them far less susceptible to the influence of the frost. The Shivering-flood, on the other hand, is fed by the molten snows of the *Vatnajökull* and other glacial mountains, and after spanning the desert of the Bursting-sand and skirting the Illdeed-lava, concludes in a long stretch of gravel and sand of its own depositing.

The way lay over similar ground after crossing the flood, but the *Þúfur* became more troublesome as the daylight waned. We reached the *Rangá* (Wrong [crooked] water) at 4 p.m., and crossed it near the farm of the same name by means of a single timber baulk thrown from bank to bank. Covered as it was with ice, this simple bridge did not offer very firm foothold, and the difficulty of inducing the pony to face it was greater than will be readily imagined. Following up the course of this stream and crossing the western spurs of the *Kinnarfell* (Cheek-fell) we reached *Ystafell* (Outermost-fell) at 5.30, having journeyed for the last hour and a half in pitchy darkness. This flourishing homestead is, or was, tenanted by a comely and lady-like widow, whose efforts to make us thoroughly comfortable were ably seconded by her pretty little daughter. Having some hours to wait for night-meal, we killed time by card-playing in the *baðstofa*, for it was far too cold to sit in the guest-room. In the latter, however, our supper was served, and here, too, Olave and I slept, while

our companions in petticoats sought the warmer air of the *baðstofa* or common room. At 9 o'clock next morning, while it was yet quite dark, we made a fresh start, and dipping into the valley, called at *Fellsel* (Fell-sheltie) for the purpose of seeing my riding ponies, *Surtr* and *Loki*, who were put here on bait for the winter. I flattered myself that by this time I knew something of Icelandic domestic habits, but I must confess I was a little taken aback when the bonder asked me to step into his bedroom to see my favourite steeds. But there they were, sure enough, in a corner of the *baðstofa*, separated only from the human inmates by a partition rising a trifle above their heads, an arrangement adopted for the sake of warmth. While I was caressing my sleek pets, Sæmundr's wife prepared us some chocolate, and as soon as the welcome bowls were drained, we made another move onwards.

The way grew ever worse as we advanced. Here in the narrow dale the snow-fall had been as great as or greater than out on the open plains, but strange to say, there had been a thaw before the frost came on, and such a degree of thaw that the fallen snow had been converted into a succession of pools, alternating with mounds covered by a thin layer of half-molten snow which had just sufficient consistency to keep it on the higher level. Whilst things were in this state hard frost had set in and produced the uneven surface of ice which we now encountered. This land ice is a great feature of the Icelandic winter, and goes by a special name, *svell*, (literally, a 'swelling'), while *íss* represents only water ice, as on lakes, rivers, etc. These patches of *svell* are immeasurably inconvenient for the traveller. Being as smooth as polished glass and very uneven, walking over them is all but impossible, and can only be accomplished at the expense of many falls and a good chance of spraining one's ankles. When the surface is moderately flat skates offer a ready means of surmounting the difficulty, but when otherwise, the only plan is to hop and skip from one to another of the tufts of withered grass that peep above the ice crust,

hoping that one's woollen stockings will hold fast, but always prepared nevertheless to let a hand break the force of the tumble that is sure to come every now and again. The Icelanders make little steel spikes for binding to the feet when crossing this sort of ground, but we were unprovided with any.

Our exertions made us so thirsty that we could not resist the temptation of calling for bowls of milk at *Kross* (113) (Cross), though that could only be done at the cost of a hard scramble up a hill and an equally disagreeable descent on the other side. The Light-water lake was now completely frozen over, and appeared as if it had been suddenly converted into ice at an instant when a gale of wind had lashed it into waves. This extraordinary appearance proved on a nearer view to be due to a dusting of dry snow powder which the wind had scattered in whirls exactly resembling waves when seen from a distance. In the Light-water pass *svell* clothed everything, and the arduous travelling commenced to tell upon our fair companions, but they held out pluckily and enabled us to reach Hause at 3.30, so that we escaped the darkness. As we were in no immediate hurry and the last stage before us was none of the best, we did not hesitate to throw ourselves once more upon the hospitality of the venerable Sir Olave.

As the morning was dull we did not leave till 10.30, by which time the night mist had cleared away and the air was bright and crisp, not to say cold. The Touchwood-water was open, but had evidently been frozen, and recently broken loose again, for on either shore were piled banks of huge ice floes frozen together in admirable confusion, and forming jagged, slippery barriers some five or six feet high, and ten feet broad, which were remarkably unpleasant to climb over. We were obliged to avail ourselves of the services of old Bersi (Bear), the ferryman of *Skógar* (Shaws), by whose aid we crossed in safety. Then came the never-to-be-forgotten Vaadle-heath with all its horrors, the same infernal *svell* haunted us to the end, and if we felt it bad on comparatively level ground, the reader will not find it difficult to



imagine the extent to which the evil was magnified when it was disposed at a considerable angle. We clutched at every boulder, twig, or grass tuft that showed above the surface, and plied our ice-staffs with desperation, all of which availed us somewhat in climbing up hill. But the descent towards the firth baffles description, it was one broad glissade, a *montagne russe* multiplied by 2000 feet; we deliberately sat down and slid one after another, using our ice-staffs only as brakes to prevent our acquiring too great a momentum, an end that was not too easily achieved. Then too, thickly clad though we were, the jarring and jolting were terrible, and bore no resemblance to a tumble or roll in the snow, which might be called mere child's play in comparison. At last the long-sighed-for though humble little 'by' of Geldingwater came into view, and we were soon drowning the memory of our bruises in the flowing bowl (of milk). Here we left our steed till we should return, but Olave the Lazy accompanied us to the cheapstead, as we heard that the mail had arrived from the south, and it would be an unpardonable breach of manners on my part not to let him take back such letters as he could deliver by the way. To reach the landing-stage we had to hack a way through the ice for more than a mile, which occupied a considerable time. The post had arrived, and brought me a goodly share of letters, of which it behoved me to make the most, as I should get no more till the following April, at least from England. A note from the Postmaster at *Reykjavík* was a trifle annoying; it informed me that two boxes which had been despatched to me from England (and contained several valuable and tender articles, as well as some plum puddings which were destined to remind me of home on Christmas day) were too heavy to be forwarded by the inland mail, and that I must therefore send after them. So much for the capacities of the mail service.

On the 21st December it became light about 9 o'clock in the morning and grew dark again at 3.30 p.m., the sun being at no time visible to us, on account of high hills to the south. On several previous days when the sky chanced to be

cloudy and dull, reading out of doors was impossible before 10 a.m., and after 2 p.m. We now got a few days of real frosty weather, and by Christmas Eve the firth, or rather the inner portion of it known as the *Pollr* (114) or Pool, was firmly frozen and covered with skaters. Yet though the thermometer (F.) stood at 12°, indicating 20° of frost, the air was so dry and still that overcoats were superfluous.

Before detailing the festivities of a modern Yule in Iceland, it will be interesting to glance back at the history of the feast and the etymology of the name. *Yól* (pronounced "yole") represents the Anglo-Saxon *iule*, *geohol*, *gehul*, or *geól*, whence our Yule is derived. The word *geól* was sometimes applied by the Anglo-Saxons to the whole month of December, and again December was called *æra geola* = ere Yule, and January *æftera geola* = after Yule, and in connexion with this it is curious to note that the Icelandic *Yól* is a plural noun. The origin of the word *Yól* is wrapped in obscurity. Generally it is connected with *hjól*, a wheel, from the sun's wheeling round at midwinter and midsummer time. In support of this theory are adduced the striking resemblance of the words, and the old Scandinavian midsummer feast, now known as *Jónsvaka* (John's wake) in Iceland, which was a kind of midsummer Yule. Originally this latter feast was doubtless heathen, being connected with the worship of the sun and light, but it has now been fitted into the Christian calendar, and appears as St. John Baptist's Day (24th June). Tales of fairies and goblins of every kind are connected with St. John's Eve as much as with Yule Eve, and remind one of Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream. But while these points are borne in mind in support of this etymology of the word *Yól*, there is another fact which must not be overlooked, viz. that whereas *Yól* is an ancient word, as old as or older than the Icelandic language itself, *hjól*, on the other hand, is a word of yesterday, first appearing, I believe, in a verse, at the beginning of the twelfth century, as a contracted form of *hvel*, which latter indeed may have been derived from the Anglo-Saxon *hweorwol* or English *wheel*, for it appears to have no synonym in the

other Scandinavian languages. Grimm was the first to suggest a relationship between the Teutonic Yule and the Latin Jūlus or Jūlius (J = Y), the one being a midwinter month, the other a midsummer month. Perhaps the plural form of the noun, *Jól*, may refer to two such feasts, the distinctive names of which have been lost.

Yule was a great feast in the heathen times, and lasted thirteen days, whence are derived the names *Þrettándi* (Thirteenth)=Epiphany or the 6th January, and the English "Twelfth-night." The heathen Yule began somewhat later than ours, namely, on *Höku-nótt*, or midwinter night, about the time of Epiphany, but the Norse King Hakon, who had been brought up in Christian England, altered the time of the festival so as to make it correspond with the English Yule, or Christmas, and so the heathen *Höku-nótt* came to represent our Christmas Eve. The etymology of this word also is obscure, but the Scottish *hogmaney*, referring to the last day of the year, or a feast given on that day, is a remnant of the ancient name. The Christian Yule Eve was called *atfanga-dagr* *Jóla* (provision-day of Yule), when stores were provided and fresh ale—Yule-ale—was brewed. Even the Yule-log was represented by the *Jóla-bál* (Yule-bale), a blazing heap of faggots, and Christmas boxes,—*Jóla gjafir* (Yule-gifts) were exchanged. There was great merry-making at the heathen Yule and tales of goblins, ogres, and satyrs were as common as the ghost story at our modern Christmas. As the night lengthens and the day shortens the ghosts are supposed to gain strength, and reach their maximum of power at Yule-tide. To each of the thirteen days of the feast was attached a tale concerning one of the *Jólasveinar* (Yule-swains), the thirteen goblin sons of the ogress *Grýla*, who was sometimes described as a fox with many brushes, but generally represented as an old hag going about with a bag kidnapping and devouring naughty children, and whose name was invoked to terrify refractory children with the brutal thoughtlessness that makes women even in these enlightened times frighten children into fits or imbecility by threats of ghosts and bogies.

Among the modern Icelanders Yule is quite as important a season as with ourselves. In popular usage Yule-Eve is a kind of landmark on the year's course, so that a man's age is counted by the number of Yule nights which he has passed, for the year is reckoned from Yule night. Hence arise the phrases to "be well or ill come in the year;" thus a person born shortly before Yule is come ill in the year, for at Yule he will be reckoned one year old, while one born just after Yule is well come in the year. Thus the significance of the occasion survives in the very breath of the people, but its celebration is otherwise than it was in the happy days of the commonwealth. Centuries of oppression and neglect, combined with one or two frightful visitations of nature, have done their work, and where plenty reigned then poverty broods now. I could easily tell on my fingers the number of bonders who would think now-a-days of fattening a sheep for Yule, and as for the fresh ale which used to be brewed especially for the feast, the very art of brewing has died out of memory, and ale is not to be had save at the two bakeries (one German, the other Danish) that supply the foreigners who are collected at the principal cheapsteads—*Reykjavík* and *Akureyri*—with bread.

Being a guest at honest old Jensen's hostelry, I accompanied his family to church, where the greater part of the daylight was devoted to a Lutheran service in Icelandic which was very numerously attended, especially by the gentler sex. The sermon was short and to the purpose, but the young priest's ideas of intonation were a study, and recalled the melody of the bagpipes. The singing was creditable, or rather might have been so were it not for a strong-lunged individual who screamed falsetto notes through his nose in a manner that threatened destruction to that useful appendage of his physiognomy. The harmonium was the handiwork of the organist, a youth who had never set foot out of his native isle, yet both the instrument and the manner of playing it showed no mean genius.

Worship over, we return to the guest-house to dinner.

The *ménu* comprised mock-turtle soup, made very thick, followed by roasted ptarmigan, and concluding with a raisin-studded kind of custard; the ptarmigan alone were a dish for a prince. Till bedtime we found abundant amusement in a sort of whist and a modification of Pope Joan.

Boxing-day was celebrated by what they were pleased to call a noblemen's ball, or as we should say, county ball, that is, invitations were restricted to the officials' and chapmen's families. About thirty of both sexes collected in the billiard-room at the inn; dancing was commenced soon after 6 p.m., and continued with great spirit till 7.30 on the following morning. The dances were just such as are common in civilized Europe, for there is no dance peculiar to Iceland, as the "reel" is to Scotland, or the "csárdás" to Hungary, but the Icelanders dance uncommonly well and gracefully. The orchestra on this occasion boasted two instruments, a concertina and a fiddle; the latter was scraped by the talented organist before mentioned, whose antics could not have been equalled by the eccentric Strauss himself. The company was rather Danish than Icelandic, and only two maidens were dressed in historical drapery with silver ornaments, and the well-known *faldr* (115) or white linen hood. This is the national head-gear of the Icelandic women, and was worn by every lady up to the end of the last century, much rivalry being shown among them as to who should wear the highest. At that time braiding of the hair was almost unknown. Now the *faldr* is rarely seen even on state occasions, and the hair is almost universally worn in plaits whose ends are turned up and hidden under the tasseled skull-cap that every female wears. A kind of *faldr* still survives in Normandy and Brittany, and it is just possible that it was of Breton origin, and reached Iceland through Britain. In modern poetry glacier-capped Iceland is represented as a woman wearing her *faldr*.

On the 3rd of January I decided to start for *Húsavík* again. The weather meantime had alternated between hard

frost and snowfall without any intermission of thaw, which augured well for our journey. We set off at a stupidly late hour, thanks to our having waited for the purpose of allowing some other travellers to join our party. The Pool was covered with ice a foot thick, so we had to take boat from the cheapstead of *Oddeyri*, jolly Magnús undertaking the "flitting" of ourselves and our wares. Darkness was looming ere we commenced the ascent of the Vaadle-heath from Gelding-water, and as we approached the summit a snow-storm broke over us and completed the obscurity. Fortunately the frozen snow that already covered the ground made walking comparatively easy, but we were in imminent danger of straying from the line of beacons, and spending a night *al fresco*. Our good luck rather than our wits led us at last to Shaws, where we made inquiries after the state of the Touchwood-water, that showed we took a lively interest in that dangerous river. The news was reassuring, it was frozen and bearing everywhere. We deemed it hardly wise, nevertheless, to lead a laden horse across the broken and jagged ice in complete darkness, and preferred to leave a couple of our party at Shaws with the horse, while we pushed on to Hause, where the accommodation would be infinitely superior. Regardless of the dimness and the cold, we struggled onwards again, wandering ever and anon from the way, as there were no beacons here to guide us. The quick eye of old Magnús the pilot stood us in good stead, and Hause was at last reached in good time for supper.

Our companions caught us up on the morrow before it had grown light, and we bent our steps towards Outmost-fell. In the valley some of us inadvertently wetted our feet in a *Kelda* or well, one of those spongy spots that never freeze, even in the hardest weather. In truth the weather was cold enough, and the greatest degree of frost that was experienced throughout the winter occurred on this day, the mercury touching 13° below zero (Fahr) or, 45 degrees of frost. The air was still, or travelling would have been impossible, but the cold produced a painful sleepy sensation, and provoked such a

burning thirst that we sought every farm for milk. It was fortunate in one respect that our throats were so dry, for on beating the snow from our stockings at one place, some of us discovered that our toes were beginning to freeze. This made a lively diversion in our uneventful tramp, but taken in time was easily remedied. We reached the buxom widow's by supper-time, and enjoyed the same hospitality as before.

Next day there was less frost, but the sky looked threatening, and we expected a snow-storm. To avoid the Wrong-water we crossed the Shivering-flood immediately to the north of the Cheek-fell, at a spot called *Vað* (Wade) from the fact that the river is fordable here in summer. Making but a short halt at House-bank, we wound away through the lava beds and round the scarp of the Flood-heath. Now the impending snow-storm broke upon us. The wind howled and whistled and whirled the white powder in our faces, while the air grew darker every moment. We hurried as much as was possible under the circumstances, and were not sorry to reach the homestead of *Garðr* (Garth). In this comfortable little house lived *Stefán* (Stephen), the carpenter who had built our hut at Guillemot-reeks. We made ourselves thoroughly at ease on the beds in the *baðstofa* and dozed away the dull hours till the time of night meal. This concluded, *Stefán* commenced the "house-lesson." In many houses the pious custom obtains of holding family prayer every evening throughout the winter, or rather from November till April. At other seasons men, women, and children are too deeply occupied in their domestic pursuits to give up so much valuable time in worship, and indeed the members of the household would be too scattered to join in it. The winter service is entirely spontaneous, and not commanded by the Church. After prayers, we looked out at the weather, and then turned in, hoping it would clear by the morning. We escaped disappointment, the day broke fine, clear and frosty. We found the Laxwater frozen once more, and walked across the shallows to Laxmoor. Between Laxmoor and House-wick the new snow was very thick, and had been drifted into waves by

the wind, so that while it lay shoulder deep in some patches, other spots were bare.

The following day was Sunday, but the weather was so propitious for shooting—clear, with the mercury several degrees below zero—that I could not resist a stroll with my gun. In a very short time I bagged twelve brace of ptarmigan, which supplied me with fresh meat for a few days.

Still the weather changed constantly, frost, snow, wind, and even thaw had their turn, but the last named never lasted long, and only affected the upper surface. On the 17th we experienced two more earthquake shocks about midday. The direction, as near as we could judge, was from S.E. to N.W. The first and stronger continued for a second or two, and was accompanied by a low rumbling noise, the second and weaker was some ten minutes later. There was a slight frost at the time and a gentle breeze was blowing from the south.

There is an Icelandic proverb which says, "Things boded will happen, so will things unboded." I saw that a commercial storm was brewing, and must soon break over my devoted head. Owing to the spasmodic and unreliable manner in which remittances were sent to me from London, I was compelled either to relinquish the undertaking committed to my charge, or to incur liabilities, never dreaming that my directors would be influenced by the lust of greed to such an extent as to withhold the money necessary to liquidate the small debts with which the undertaking was burdened. Unwilling to conceal the fact from the creditors, men whose enmity would have nipped the enterprise in the bud and whose unwavering friendship only enabled me to conduct the Company's affairs, I frankly told them the state of the case. A meeting was convened by them at *Húsavík* under the presidency of the *Sýslumaður*, and the defaulting Company's property was distrained upon and held in lien. One kind friend, the Rapesteerer who has already figured somewhat conspicuously in this chapter, proposed my incarceration in the new jail (which the Danish Government had



caused to be built at *Húsavík* so soon as they had let their sulphur diggings to an English house), and thought—innocent man—that my being held as a hostage would induce the company to pay up! But he was spared what would have been a severe lesson on the feelings of Companies, by an intimation that he should support me meanwhile. Thus I remained a free man. I had foreseen that the disclosure I had made would effectually shut the door against my getting any personal necessities at the cheapstead, where I was already indebted, for as everybody's business is nobody's business, so neither Directors nor Secretary felt it incumbent upon them to remit my salary as it fell due, and knowing that I was too far off to make a legal claim or insist upon my due, they were "canny" enough to go into liquidation in my absence and thus leave me to whistle for my own. This latter exhibition of 'cuteness, as I suppose they considered it, I had not anticipated, but I had in some sort of measure prepared to look in the face of an empty larder and no credit, and during my Christmas sojourn at *Akureyri* I had sounded the public generally on the subject of their taking English lessons. I had plenty of everything to last till the end of the month, and of many things I had much more than I required. By selling the latter I scraped together sufficient money to pay the expense of my journey to *Akureyri*; then packing up the books and vouchers, and gathering together all my various *impedimenta*, some stowed in boxes and trunks and some only in old gunny bags, I piled everything on a huge sleigh kindly lent for the occasion by my friend at Laxmoor.

From early morn until dark on the last day of January I was fully occupied in bidding adieux to my surrounding friends. The honest and industrious carls, who had worked for me so well in spite of all the laments of previous travellers concerning their laziness and uselessness, collected to give me a parting shake of the hand, and I could not help noticing the tears that glistened in the eyes of poor little Stepi. Ingaldur the Strong having preceded me with the sleigh, I set off on foot, wielding an ice-staff, and accompanied only by a

little puppy, the parting gift of trusty Páll, who had already started for his home in the east of Iceland some days previously. Somewhat upset at the turn events had taken, and influenced by the cold, dreary weather in which I set out, my mind reverted to the half-superstitious efforts of my friends to prevent me from entering *Húsavík* on foot, now that I found myself leaving it in a still more humiliated condition. But soon the roughness of the way absorbed my thoughts in my footsteps, and presently I chanced upon other travellers, and we fared in company to Laxmoor, my destination for the night.

At breakfast next morning I met Sir B. K. of M., and referring to his escapade with the wine and the cook, he told me that when he fell into the Laxwater, he and his horse floated some 150 yards, the horse swimming and the owner clutching its mane. On reaching firm ice the pony jumped up and dislodged Sir B., who was left struggling in the cold water, unable to swim or get hold of the ice. Fortunately the accident happened close to a farm, and by this time men were attracted by his shouts, and came with ropes to the rescue. I should fancy the shock must have been enough to keep the Provost away from the bottle for some time to come. Here, as usual, some strangers asked to be allowed to accompany me; a man who was fuddled before we started, and became so drunk at last, that we left him at a wayside farm; and two women, one young, single, and active, the other middle-aged, married, and to such a degree "interesting" that I dreaded an increase to our numbers *en route*. All were bound for *Akureyri*. We left Laxmoor at 10.30 in clear but awfully cold weather, and crossing the Laxwater without any trouble, we made difficult progress across the lava beds, in a direction almost due west, our object being to make the Shivering-flood and get on the ice as quickly as possible. After much trouble in getting the sleigh over the thin snow on the lava beds, we reached *Sandr* (Sand) a small farm near the Flood. We had only just reached here when the wind, which had been blowing stiffly, increased to a perfect hurricane. Stones as large as hazel-nuts were whisked round and round, and piled in heaps, while smaller fragments

of rock and sand of all sizes filled the air to such an extent that daylight was obscured and breathing rendered painful even in sheltered spots. The strongest man could not stand against the force of the gale, and a man who was approaching on horseback from a neighbouring farm was lifted bodily out of his saddle, and the pony turned its tail round to the wind, and stood with its legs sprawled out and looking as terrified as if an earthquake were happening. These hurricanes are a peculiarity of this district, or rather they are more frequent and more violent here than in other places. For this reason the last fifteen miles or so of the Shivering-flood valley is known as the *Kaldakinn* (116) (Cold-cheek). The cause may probably be sought in the mass of lofty peaks which here bound the valley westwards and throw a long tongue out into the sea. The fury of the blast was soon spent, but the air remained quite dense with dust and fine sand which insinuated itself into every orifice and made the eyes smart terribly.

In a short time we got on to the frozen Flood, and our progress immediately improved. Our drunken companion possessed a horse on which, at her own suggestion, we installed the stout dame, cavalier fashion and without a saddle, and I could scarcely believe my eyes when she galloped or trotted this stiff-legged stumbling brute without a whisper of discomfort. Ingald rode the sturdy nag who drew the sleigh, the young woman buried herself among my rugs and bedding on the top of the load, and the drunken one and I ran with a hand on either side of the sleigh on the look out for a spill. Thus we sped along right merrily in spite of the growing gloom, till we were compelled to leave the friendly ice opposite the farm-house of *Höll* (Hill). On halting we found that some things had slipped from the sleigh in the darkness, and as they could not be discovered on our tracks near at hand, I decided to make this our night's quarters, so that the search might be continued at day-break. The "by" was so small and the bonder so poor that accommodation for all save myself had to be sought in surrounding *bær*, some half-dozen lying here

in a cluster. I had learnt to proportion my expectations according to circumstances, and therefore was by no means disconcerted to hear that I should have to share a bed with my host and hostess.

The missing things were found and replaced on the sleigh, and before it was fairly light we were again under weigh, having escaped from our drunken companion. We could now only advance at a foot's pace, on account of the inequalities of the ground and the paucity and uneven distribution of the snow. Ingaldur bestrode the steed, the women took turns in walking and reclining on the load, and I performed the duties of pilot and brakesman. When descending towards the Light-water we had a slight mishap. There was so much *svell* here that the women mistrusted themselves to walk, and were both seated on the sleigh, despite the danger that attended such a proceeding, when the slope and the hummocky nature of the ice-coated ground made it a very difficult matter to steer the sleigh at all. In passing over one of these hummocks the sleigh over-balanced and pitched the two women head foremost on the terribly hard ground. Poor creatures, the least I expected was a broken limb, or a fractured skull, for the frost was severe at the time, and they had been thrown with great force, but they uttered never a word of complaint, and were quite ready to resume their seats so soon as Ingaldur and I had righted the sleigh. On the lake we were able to hasten again, but darkness drew over us before we had reached the farther end. Here again the snow was so thin and the way so bad that it was impossible to take the sleigh on till daylight. Ingaldur proposed that we should seek quarters for the night at a little neighbouring hut, but I doubted its capacity to take in so many guests, and as I knew the way perfectly, I decided in the face of the gloom to walk on alone to Hause and leave the others to overtake me in the morning. Thus we arranged it, and bade each other good night.

"Marry in haste and repent at leisure" says the proverb, and I soon began to think better of the task I had undertaken. I was quite prepared to find no path properly speaking, but I

had reckoned upon being able to follow the line of the hills without mounting from the plain. My mistake soon revealed itself, for the plain was a swamp, and an unfrozen swamp, where I might slip into a "well" at any moment, and thus pass direct into the next world. Without question I must scale the low hills, but that was an extremely difficult operation, not only by reason of the darkness and the cold, but because the hill sides were covered with one sheet of ice and were moderately steep. The climb and much of the journey after I had reached the low summit were performed on all fours, and I could not help laughing aloud to think what a ridiculous figure I must have cut. Presently it became so dark that I positively could not see the ground under my feet, and it was only by the aid of a stray star or two that I could regulate even the direction in which I was going. I can assure the reader who may care to try it that the number of stars required to guide a man over broken country to a solitary Iceland farm is very considerable, and whether I reached my destination or no that night depended little upon them. Deceived by the undulating nature of the ground and my slow rate of advance, I began to fear that I had overstepped the farm or ascended too much towards the mountains, and under this impression I trended away somewhat to the right. After a while I came to a very steep and slippery bend which threatened to bar my path altogether. Seating myself with my hands behind me, I proceeded to work my way along the face of the slope, and had gone some distance when I suddenly became aware of the unpleasant fact that I was slipping down hill. I could not stop myself, there was nothing to take hold of, and my utmost efforts were needed to prevent my gaining an impetus that would have sealed my fate. I peered downwards most anxiously, but could discern nothing, and the suspense increased what was probably but a short distance to awful proportions. At last I reached the bottom, and after walking a few yards on what I could feel was turf overlaid with snow, I caught sight—not of the farm, but what was nearly as good—the sheep-house lying half a mile from it. From the sheep-

house I easily discovered tracks leading to the *bær*, and astonished the good folks not a little by presenting myself at the door, alone, and at such a time.

There seemed to have been somewhat of a special Providential influence at work in guiding me to shelter, for we awoke next morning to witness a howling snow-storm. My companions would have remained where they had spent the night, but the wretched place produced no hay fit for the horse and no food nor accommodation fit for human beings, so they had no alternative but to follow me to Hause. Here we were storm-bound for forty-eight hours. The wind blew with terrific fury, the air became darkened, so that even at midday it was impossible to see a yard around the spot one stood on. The snow, which was in a fine powdery state, did not fall in any great quantity, far more would have fallen in England or Scotland during the same time; but the furious wind drifted it about in such a manner, catching up what had already fallen, and whirling it through the air time after time, that the fall appeared much more considerable than it really was. The elements which combine to produce the terrors of an Icelandic snow-storm are the violence of the gale, the darkness, the cold, and the bewildering effect of all these added to the fineness of the snow, which penetrates the folds of the clothes, and chokes ears, nose, eyes, and mouth. Of course travelling is quite impossible when the storm is at its height, and dangerous enough at any part of it. The evils of the storm would be qualified to some extent, if only there were a heavy fall, so that a man might shelter himself beneath the snow from the influence of the frost, which is the real enemy. I think the terrible character of a snow-storm in this region is admirably illustrated by the expression used by the Icelanders to denote that a man has met his death in that way, they say only "*Hann varð úti!*"—he was out—a simple sentence with a deep signification, for it seems to imply that to be out was all that was required to bring about the tragic event.

During my long enforced stay at Hause, I had abundant

opportunity to compare modern with ancient Icelandic architecture, and to study the occupations of the inmates of the dwelling.

In the first place it is necessary to remark that all the heathen Scandinavian buildings were of timber, probably lined with panelling inside, and the interstice packed with dry moss to keep out the cold draughts, just as my hut was built at Guillemot-recks. There is a stone hall mentioned in the *Njálsaga*, but this is doubtless an anachronism. The *hús* (117) (house) comprised the whole group of buildings of which the homestead and outsteads were composed. Principal in the latter was the banqueting-hall, variously named *höll* (118) (hall), *skáli* (shieling), *eldhús* (119) (fire-house), &c. *Höll*, in the Norse, was applied solely to a king's or earl's hall, and cannot, therefore, properly be used of an Icelandic dwelling. The following were the main features of this hall. It was oblong in form, generally disposed east and west, and had doors at one or both ends through the south wall, close to where it met the gable ends. These doors, when two, were known as the *karldyrr* (carls' door), and *kveundyrr* (queens' door), the former leading to that wing of the hall where the men sat, the other to the benches occupied by the women. Often the posts of the carls' door were adorned with the *brandar* or beaks, from the prow and poop of the ship that had brought the colonists to their new home.

The outer door of the dwelling-house opened first into what was called the *forskáli* (fore shieling), *forstofa*, and *dyri* (porch) or *framhús* (fore-house), a kind of lobby or ante-chamber. This was sometimes portioned off into an inner room or bay, *klefi* (120) (closet) and the vestibule proper. In the *klefi* were kept stores of meal, dried cod-fish, and perhaps beer, for that was a general beverage in those days. Inside, the hall divided into three chief parts; the main hall in the centre, and on either side, probably outside of it, ran a *skot* (121) or dark, narrow passage, separated by a low partition wall. The plan of the hall has been aptly likened to that of one of our regular-built churches without a chancel, such as a

Suffolk church of the fifteenth century, the nave or hall proper in the centre, and the aisles or *skot* running the whole way along it and communicating behind a *daís*. In such troublous times it was necessary to be ever on the watch against a night attack, and the *skot* formed convenient bedrooms for the men. Throughout their whole length and round behind the *daís* they were partitioned off into *lok-hvélur* or *lok-rekkjur* (lock-beds). On the paneled wall that separated the hall from the bed-rooms hung the shields and weapons of the sleepers, ready for use at a moment's notice. Sometimes this wall was painted with illustrations of mythical subjects and adorned with fantastic carvings; and on grand occasions it was covered with hangings. In some cases the beds opened into the hall by a doorless aperture, in others they were hidden from the hall.

Along both sides of the hall and under the partition walls ran the rows of seats or substitutes for chairs, called *bekkr* (122) (benches). The row towards the north and facing the midday sun was considered the nobler or *æðri bekk* (higher bench), the other was the *úæðri bekk* (*lit.* unhigher [lower] bench). In the middle of either bench was a seat styled the high seat, *öndvegi* or *öndugi* (*lit.* opposite way), from their being placed opposite to one another. These were the most honoured places in the hall, and a chief guest used to be placed in the southern high seat. The English custom of the master and mistress of the house sitting at opposite ends of the table is most likely a remnant of the old Scandinavian custom. The sides of the northern high seat were ornamented with uprights, *öndugis súlur* (high seat poles), carved with figures, such as the head of Thor or the like, and were regarded with superstitious reverence. Many of the Icelandic colonists took their high seat posts with them from Norway, and, having thrown them overboard when nearing the new shore, built their houses as near as possible to the spot where they drifted aland. The arrangement of the benches differed in Iceland and Norway, and in each country at various times. On occasions of a feast or wedding they were decked with tapestry, and the floor was covered with straw as in the old



English halls. In front of the benches were placed the boards that bore the meals, and when the number of the company exceeded the capacity of the ordinary benches others were placed in front of the boards so that two rows ran down either side of the hall with the tables between them. These last were termed *forsæti* (fore-seats).

In cold climates fire and life go together, and it is natural that the principal room should have been an *eld-skáli* (fire-shieling) or *eldhús* (fire-house). An oblong hearth was built all down the middle of the hall, and fires called *lang-eldar* (long-fires) were then kindled. The benches were on each side of the fire, and hence the phrase "to hand the ale round the fire." Sometimes the fire seems to have been made in a pit in the middle of the floor. The chief uses of the long fires were to give heat and light, and though they were perhaps occasionally used for cooking, they must not be confounded with the *mál-eldar* (meal-fires) or small cooking-fires. The smoke that arose from the burning fuel found its way out through the *ljóri* (louvre), an opening in the middle of the ridge of the roof; the only chimney mentioned, the *reyk-beri* (reek-bearer), appears to have been some sort of contrivance for creating a draught through the *ljóri*. Through this same *ljóri* light was partially admitted into the hall. The men who kept watch used to sit also by the *ljóri*. Such multifarious applications of this louvre seem somewhat puzzling, but probably its uses varied with the seasons. Thus in winter there would be no light to admit and nothing to guide the eye of the watchman, should enemies be abroad at that time, which was very unusual; moreover, one would fancy that he would be half smothered with the smoke which collected there. On the other hand, in summer fires would not be necessary, whether for heating or lighting purposes, and the watchman could at that season see far and near at all hours in the twenty-four. The word *ljóri* distinctly refers to lighting, and is derived from *ljós* (light), though its use was equally as much that of a louvre or ventilator. During that age glass was not in use for window-making. The word *gler* (glass) originally meant amber, beads

of which were in early demand for ornaments, and have been found in quantities in the cairns and fens of the earliest Iron Age of Scandinavia, but only in a single instance in a deposit of the Bronze Age ; and such is the sense of the word *gler* in old heathen poems. Magical runes were sometimes written on glass. For window-panes glass is of much later date, and came into use probably with the building of cathedrals ; in Iceland the first panes were doubtless those presented by Bishop Páll to the cathedral at *Skálholt* in 1195. But though the ancient halls and dwellings had no glass windows in the walls, the small amount of light admitted by the *ljóri* was supplemented by that penetrating through round openings (*gluggir*) in the roof covered with the caul of a new-born calf, called *skjall* (membrane) or *líkna-belgr* (lich or lyke [body] bag), stretched on a circular frame or hoop *skjá-grind* (window-lattice), and forming *skjáir* (windows). These could be taken out at will, and then served as outlets for smoke. In some instances *skjár* seems to be used synonymously with *ljóri*. Such antiquated skylights may still be seen in some of the poorer Icelandic farm-houses. Once or twice mention is made in the Sagas of *hlíð-skjáir* (side-windows) in the walls, from which, originally, a look-out was kept. These were the forefathers of the windows of modern Icelandic dwellings.

Sometimes at the upper end of the hall was a *daïs* or raised floor (*pallr*), (123) where the ladies sat. The adoption of this word was probably connected with the change in the floor and seats of the halls which was introduced from Norman England, and is, in fact, still seen in English college halls, with the raised floor at the upper end. In Iceland the ladies were then seated on this *daïs*, instead of being placed, according to the older custom, on the left-hand bench along the wall. Here was also a high seat, *öndvegi á palli*, generally taken by the mistress of the house.

Besides this principal hall and its surroundings, there were other rooms in the dwelling. After the banquet the women retired, and left the men to enjoy their cups. For them a special sitting-room was provided, called the *stofa* (124) or

*stufa*, which, in its oldest sense, seems to have been a "stove"-room. Another chamber also was devoted to the evening bath, and known as the *baðstofa* (bath-room); this was commonly in the rear of the dwelling, in the position, that is to say, of its degenerate successor of the present day. The buildings composing the *bæjar-hús* (by-house) or *heima-hús* (home-house) were commonly placed in a row, the front (*hús-bust*) facing the sea, or a river if in a dale, or looking south; the back (*húsa-bak*) turned to the mountain. The pavement about a yard wide along the front is called *stétt* (a word doubtless akin to Ang.-Sax. *stihtan* = to found, hence properly a "foundation"), and the open space in front *hlað* (125); the buildings are parted by a lane, *sund* (sound or strait); the whole surrounded by a turf and stone wall, *húsa-garðr* (house-garth); and a lane called *geil*, or in modern usage *tráðir*, leads up to the houses and house-yard. The *úti-hús* (out-houses) and *ffjár-hús* (fee [sheep] house) are at a distance from the homestead. The *geymslu-hús* (126) or store-house is tacked on at one end. Such then were the characteristics of the homes of the bonders of the Icelandic Commonwealth; in no way luxurious, but decently comfortable for all that.

The dying words of the Highland laird to his son,—“When ye hae naething else to do, ye may be aye sticking in a tree; it will be growing when ye’re sleeping”—contained counsel worthy to be pondered by every man of every nation. To the destruction of the Icelandic woods or shaws may be traced the origin of almost all the evil that has befallen the island and her sons. Grain-crops had to be abandoned, because there was not weather for ripening the corn. Smiling valleys became howling wildernesses of cold, sour peat bog. Wilful waste brought woeful want, and poverty is ever attended by a train of ills. Yet the same process is at work among the civilized Americans as well as the heathen Chinese at this very moment; it is so common a failing of mankind in all ages and all lands, that the death-bed advice of the Highland laird savours of inspiration. In the case of Iceland, one of the most palpable evidences of decay is offered by the modern dwelling as com-

pared with the ancient. Timber being now a high-priced luxury, recourse is had to lava blocks and turf sods; except among the Danish settlers and a few Government houses, there are not a dozen timber-built dwellings in the island, and stone and mortar have got a footing within the last five years, that is, since limestone has been worked in the mountains opposite *Reykjavík*. The turf-and-stone walls are necessarily of great thickness—two to three feet—and stunted height, to insure stability against the wind. The open batten roof is tiled with huge flakes of turf laid on birch or willow-twigs, and is paneled on the inside. In the spring the turf becomes as green as the neighbouring field; this fact sealed the fate of the goats, to whom it offered a tempting pasture inconsistent with a water-tight ceiling; they followed in the wake of the pigs and fowls, who disappeared with the decline of agriculture. The better farms still keep up some semblance of ancient grandeur in the wooden *gesta-skáli* (127) (guest-shieling) or guest-chamber that forms the front of the dwelling on one, sometimes on both sides of the outer door. This may be a remnant of the old hall or perhaps of the ladies' sitting-room, but it differs as much in its detail as in its application from either. It is a small, floored and paneled chamber, provided with a locker bed and with glazed windows that do not often open on hinges, but may be lifted bodily out of the sash frames; furniture will be represented by a board on trestles, a chest or two of drawers, rarely a sofa, always an indefinite number of family clothes-chests, the latter painted in the gaudiest manner, as are also the walls of the room. A portrait of Jón Síгурðsson, the national agitator, or a framed inscription and copy of verses dedicated to the memory of a departed relative, complete the picture. The room is devoted, as its name implies, solely to the accommodation of guests, and is never occupied by the family; being without a fireplace or even double windows, it offers a sadly comfortless refuge to the winter traveller. In summer it forms the most tenantable portion of the house, and foreigners have good reason to be thankful that they are admitted no farther. Above it is generally a small attic,

which serves for a store. On the opposite side of the mud-floored lobby into which the guest-room opens is often a kind of carpenter's shop and general lumber-room. On either side again of these, and facing in the same direction, are the stores of various kinds.

At the end of the lobby facing the outer door is a second door, leading into a long, turf-walled, low-roofed, dirt-floored passage. Out of this tunnel open the other apartments, the chief being the *baðstofa* and the *eldhús*. The old hall has disappeared *in toto*, to be represented by the modern *eldhús*, which is simply a turf hovel without window or skylight of any kind, and having a small stone hearth for the accommodation of a peat fire for cooking purposes, the reek from which is intended to escape by a tiny wooden chimney-pot stuck on a hole in the roof, but more generally—especially in windy or snowy weather—prefers to spread throughout the dwelling and there condense as soot. The bath-room is gone, irrevocably gone, but gives its name to the room which now occupies its place and serves for the one living-room of the whole household, old and young, married and single, male and female, master and servants, children and dogs. The chamber entrance is generally near one end; the walls, ceiling, and floor are boarded in most, though not in all cases; the height of the walls does not exceed five feet, and from them rises the ridge roof attaining to about eight feet at the apex. In fair weather light struggles in through six square inches of membrane or glass, in foul the aid of a small lamp, almost identical with those used by the Wallachian miners of Hungary, or those unearthed from the ruined cities at the foot of Vesuvius—fed with sheep's tallow or fish oil, is invoked. Ranged around the walls are low, broad benches, separated by partitions not a foot high and heaped up with eider-down quilts, blankets, and cushions; these are the beds, and serve also as settees in the day-time.

If the reader will bend very low and lift his feet very high, while he takes me by the hand, and if he feels quite secure from asphyxiation, he shall enter the *baðstofa* with me on a winter

evening, and I will introduce him to its occupants and their vocations ; but if he does not obey the two first conditions, he will probably arrive with a contused head or a barked shin. You may well sigh after penetrating such a tunnel. As you are a stranger and unused to local ways, we will excuse you from greeting all the inmates with a shake of the hand, as I am bound to do. You say you can't see the inmates ? Well, it is a little dim, but come and sit on a bed with me till your eyes accustom themselves to the change. You complain of the stuffiness of the atmosphere ? But as you see there is no stove nor fireplace of any kind in the room, and it is only by stuffing up every chink and cranny that would admit air, and by crowding the space with beings, that sufficient heat can be maintained to preserve the whole family from being frozen alive. There is a ventilator too, in the roof—no, not there, those are rolls of wool lying on the wall plate—just above our heads, that little wooden funnel with a hole in the top about an inch over. It is a trifle stuffy, but when you find that warmth can only be got with stuffiness, it strikes me you will think less about the latter. Those shelves just before us in the corner contain the small but highly prized library ; one half the volumes will be religious, the other half native Sagas, as we misname them, or *Sögur* if you can pronounce the word. The four youths on the bed opposite are playing cards, and a fine row they make over it. The curious implements standing in the four-feet passage that divides the chamber, and over which you stumbled as you came in, are regular old-fashioned spinning-jennies, as you will very soon hear by the abominable buzzing hum-m-m they make when the women who sit near them have gazed their full at you and commence to work. The rest of the four-feet space is occupied by children who are numerous and noisy, and dogs who are more numerous and not less noisy. The elderly dame of rather superior appearance and manners, who came out to welcome us in just now, is the house-mother as they call her ; she is combing wool and keeping an eye on the servants. In the corner at the farther end sits an old blind man, spinning,

and next him is his wife, an aged crone who knits and snuffs alternately; they are both paupers. Here comes the bonder to have a chat with us. As you say, it is difficult to distinguish the master or mistress from the servants, for they all dress alike, but I must remind you that there are two bonder families living in the house, as well as married and unmarried servants of both sexes. This will partly account for the plenitude of babies, though, to say the truth, they don't always wait for the parson. Your head aches with the confusion and hubbub, and well it may, but what will you say presently when the undressing and washing of babies supersedes the hum of the spinning-jennies, and half a score of infants scream an opposition to going to bed. Not only is it distracting for the moment, it haunts one for ever, and the mere memory of it should be sufficient to cure the most love-sick swain of his passion. This is supposed to be the great season for study—the long and tedious winter evenings in the *bæðstofa*. You may well say, heaven help the man who tried to study under such conditions; but the Icelanders are of a slow and lethargic disposition, and his temperament can bear with impunity what to a sensitive man is complete agony; moreover, his memory is marvellously retentive, and he needs only to see or hear a thing once to recollect it as long as he lives. That lazy rascal who has just come in and flung himself on the bed, bidding a hardly used maid to pull off his wet and snowy garments, is the shepherd but lately returned from caring for the sheep at the fee-house we passed half a mile from the farm. The indolent vagabond has not earned his salt all day, yet he bullies a girl into waiting upon him. But hurrah for the supper which will check some of the uproar; bowls of sour *skyr* and oatmeal and chips of dried fish. You will remark that neither table, nor plate, nor knife, nor fork is necessary; the "spoon-victuals" are helped in by wooden ladles, and the solid fish is devoured by the aid of fingers and strong teeth. This is fortunate, for it would be difficult to find a place for tables, were such required. Of course they will rig up a small board for us, and bring us knives and forks, such as they are, and delicacies in the shape

of smoked mutton, black pudding pickled in sour whey, excellent butter, &c., will be set before us, for we are honoured and respected guests, but the ordinary individual will get nothing but what he can eat with a spoon or in his fingers. After evensong the inmates retire to bed, lying packed like herrings, head to foot. The sexes do not mix promiscuously, and the greatest censure is deserved by a certain reverend author, who in a morbid sensational manner relates that the people sleep in a nude condition. It is simply a gross libel, for it would be almost as difficult to drag an Icelander out of his under-clothing as to rob him of his skin. There is no reason why the devil should be painted blacker than he is, and silly statements of this kind do harm to the writer as much as to the written about.

This digression has run to a great length, but the reader may console himself with the reflection that he has only had to bear a small fraction of the tedium which I suffered during the forty-eight hours. On the morning of the third day, the weather had cleared somewhat, but it was intensely cold, and the wind was furious. Still I so longed for a change that I told Ingaldur to prepare for a start. The sleigh had to be left, and most of my things with it, for with soft new snow on the ground the pony would not be able to take a great load across the heath. We packed a few of the most necessary articles on the horse's back, and the good Sir Olave promised to send on the remainder so soon as the weather permitted—a promise the worthy old man faithfully fulfilled. At 9.15 we set out, Ingaldur leading the nag, the two women hanging on by the pack-saddle, one at either side, and I walking ahead and prodding for hidden holes. The Touchwood-water looked like a broad line of angular blocks of white marble thrown together in the utmost confusion and dusted over with snow-powder. This showed that the rebellious stream had broken up and refrozen since my last journey. Passing over it now was a matter rather of difficulty than of danger, and the same way be said of the climb over the heath. Plunging through the yielding snow was tedious work, and on the summit the



fall had been so great that we had to bear the pony's loads and assist the animal itself. The poor women were really objects of pity, and their labours were intensified by their dress, but they struck at it in a manner that showed the old dogged Viking blood which has too often disappeared from the sterner sex. From Gelding-water we sailed across the firth, and reached *Akureyri* at 2 p.m.

I soon settled myself in my old quarters at the *herbergi* (128) (host-burgh) or inn, and commenced to look up pupils. Had I not been in an absolutely insolvent condition, I should naturally have spurned the idea of making any charge for my teaching, but being dependent upon it for bread and bed it became a necessity. Nevertheless I think the modesty of my demands will be admitted when I say that my highest fee was 33 *aurar*, or 4½*d per hour*. Among the students, I was in a short time able to count the doctor, the apothecary, several of the chapmen, the schoolmaster, a sprinkling of young ladies who were by no means inferior scholars, and a number of clerks and youths. Living was so cheap, yet thoroughly good, that at the humble charge I have named, I made more than double the cost of my board and lodging. Of course I had to work hard, being at it every weekday from 7 a.m. till 10 p.m., with only sufficient break for my meals, and even on Sundays I took a few who were too much occupied at other times ; but then my heart was in the task, and there was much pleasure in teaching scholars whose capacity for learning and application to the subject were very prominent. The chief stumbling-blocks in pronunciation were soft *g*, *j*, and *ch* ; the *th* hard and soft, so perplexing to other Teutons and Scandinavians was rendered easy to them by acquaintance with their own *ð* and *þ*.

It was not long before another clerical scandal disturbed the even tenor of my way. I had retired to rest, and had slept, as I thought for several hours, when I was rudely awakened by the Hausknecht, who in tones of great trepidation begged me to slip on my trousers and come downstairs. Poor old Jensen was lying ill in bed, and I was the only male

lodger in the house. Of course I obeyed with alacrity, and, glancing at my watch, found it was a few minutes after 2 a.m. On reaching the foot of the stairs my disturber met me with a lamp and led me to the little breakfast parlour. Long ere we opened the door I could hear howling and yelling as if the place were tenanted by a party of Bearsarks, and I recognized the voices of the two priests and a well-known member of the Lower House whom I had met at supper. What a sight presented itself as we forced the apartment! The stove had been knocked over and rolled out into the middle of the room; the table and stools did not own a sound leg among them; pictures had been stripped from the walls, and lay scattered over the floor; while the lamp which usually hung by a chain from the ceiling had been dashed into a corner and smashed to atoms. Rolling among the wreckage and petroleum, and in darkness till we brought a light, were the three ornaments to their country, roaring, screaming drunk. The honourable member lay on his back with the bigger of the two sons of the Church kneeling on his chest, and the second parson was making vain attempts to liberate the prisoner. They looked sheepish enough at being discovered and reproached by a foreigner, and were not long in regaining their legs, though they continued to glare at each other like tiger-cats. It required about an hour's persuasion before I could get them to bed. The burly M.P. had had enough of it, and was glad to escape unnoticed as quickly as possible; but the ministers of the Gospel were to have occupied the same couch for the night, and it seemed advisable that they should cool a bit first. At last the victorious priest declared that he would not share a bed with his *confrère*, and intended rather to sleep on the floor of the room where we were, so we fetched him a pillow and some blankets, and hurried his companion away by himself.

Such an instance as I have just given of the shortcomings of the Icelandic clergy might be multiplied indefinitely from my own personal experience. I have known a parson to sleep in a ditch, so drunk that he could not walk twenty

yards to find a house ; I can remember a burial that had to be postponed because the priest was so intoxicated that he could not read the service ; and a case was recently in everybody's mouth where a well-educated clergyman was so heavily under the influence of drink at a celebration of the Holy Communion, that he stumbled and fell across the altar-rails. In other respects, too, their depravity is not exceeded by that of the avowedly degraded priests of the Greek Church. Abuse of other men's wives and open living with unmarried women is so common that it excites no comment, and it is a customary thing for a priest to pay another man a small *douceur* to falsely acknowledge the paternity of a child of which the priest is himself the father. Facts like these are as inexcusable and deplorable as among our own clergy, because the Lutheran Church does not forbid her priests to marry.

The immorality of the clergy has a direct and damning influence upon the morals of the population, and when their leaders give way, it is not surprising that the ignorant classes should imitate them. Byron would never have exclaimed, "Happy, ye nations of the moral North !" if he had seen a little of the *vie intime* of Iceland. I know a young guide living near *Akureyri*, who is the father of seven illegitimate children, all by different mothers, whence he has received the nickname of Bairnie-G— ; and another guide contrived on a fortnight's journey between the two principal cheapsteads to lay the foundations of no less than five sons and daughters. Captain Burton explains this state of things by two words, "ichthyophagy and idleness," and this explanation is eminently critical ; passion and intrigue are absolutely foreign to the case, all is done with the same cold blood as a man eats his dinner, and it is looked upon in much the same light as sleeping or eating or any other necessary part of every-day life. To the large percentages of phosphorus and iodine contained in the cod fish which is the chiefest and constant diet of the people, must also doubtless be attributed their remarkable fecundity and other evidences of the health

and strength of their cerebral systems. For instance, it is a most unusual thing for a doctor to be called in at a childbirth, and the mother resumes her ordinary household duties in an incredibly short time after the auspicious event. Then, again, Iceland is one of the very few countries that are not ravaged by that scourge of humanity, syphilis, and its associated evils. To be sure her settlements are not disgraced by the presence of those modern Paphians who are such an ugly blot upon *our* vaunted civilization, and intriguing with a stranger is regarded as a heinous offence, yet the disease has made its appearance more than once, only, however, to die a natural death. To return for a moment to the subject of drunkenness. A vast amount of time and temper has been expended upon the question whether the Icelanders are more drunken as a nation than the Scotch and English, or no. I shall not attempt to solve this very knotty point; but this I will say, that while among us the vice has spread in a very painful degree to the gentler sex, even amidst the most refined and cultured families, I never once saw or heard of an Icelandic woman under the influence of drink, nor even addicted to sipping nips of spirits surreptitiously, which is far worse both morally and physically than getting thoroughly intoxicated occasionally.

It is stepping a little out of chronological order to mention now that, availing myself of the incapacitation of the postman through an attack of mumps, I arranged with the authorities to despatch Olave the Lazy to *Reykjavík* in quest of my boxes. He returned with the mail on the 20th of February, bringing, however, only one of the packages. On questioning him as to the fate of the other, for I guessed it had gone to the bottom of a river, or rolled over a precipice, he had the assurance to tell me that he had looked carefully over the contents of the two cases—having forced them open for the purpose, you will observe—and had left behind everything which he did not think I absolutely required! The incident was trifling in itself—though the *puddings* were among the missing—but it serves to show the sort of idea these fellows

have of obeying orders. Jón is as good as his master, and fancies himself to be immeasurably superior.

I had determined to embrace the earliest opportunity for quitting the island, and therefore prepared to accompany the postman leaving for *Reykjavik* on the 3rd of March and meeting the first steamer of the season. *Loki* and *Surtr* were brought from their snug quarters in the bonder's bedroom, carefully groomed and exercised, and shod with steel-spiked shoes. A pack-horse was at the same time secured for carrying my most important effects, the remainder being applied to the liquidation of sundry small debts, or left to await the direct steamer. On the appointed day—a glorious day, fine and frosty—we set off, every friend who possessed a horse accompanying us for a couple of miles. In a lovely dell overlooking the firth, which was studded with icebergs, the stirrup-cup was drunk, and my friends parted from me with little expectation of seeing my face again. But the Fates had not been consulted. Somewhat unwell at starting, the severe exercise of riding two such fiends as *Loki* and *Surtr* soon aggravated my sickness to such a degree that I had much difficulty in retaining my seat as far as *Bægisá*, where I knew there lived a clever homœopath. My friend, Sir Árnljótr (for he has the cure of souls as well as of bodies, and has since been elected an Honourable Member of the *Alþing* to boot), had a bed prepared for me in his study, and duly dosed me for what we agreed was a mild attack of dysentery. I soon recovered under his care, but it was out of the question that I could overtake the postman, who had necessarily continued his journey without me, and it was equally certain that I should be more than mad to attempt to proceed alone. After resting a day or two, therefore, I plucked up sufficient courage to take myself and my nags back to *Akureyri*, where I was most kindly re-welcomed.

In the meantime, however, the schoolmaster had stepped into my shoes, and was teaching the greater number of my former pupils, so that I had cut the ground from under me, and found myself once more without the means of subsistence. But faithful old Jensen came to my rescue, and insisted upon my

accepting his hospitality the same as before, on the very easy conditions of "pay when you like!" *Loki* and *Surtr* were put into stable, but the pack-horse had been seized by the Company's creditors and had to go to *Húsavík*. I had retained the use of my riding-nags by transferring them to the owner of the house at *Húsavík* (who was living at *Reykjavík*) on condition that I should be allowed to take them myself to their destination. Without some such precaution, I should have had to make the fortnight's journey on foot.

Some of the more advanced scholars still took lessons of me, but much of my time was thrown on my hands. I ransacked the shelves of the local library, which does great credit to the place—there were standard works in Icelandic, Danish, English, French, German, Latin, and Greek, and a few even of Persian, Hebrew, and Chinese authors—and often joined the skaters on the firth, or took *Surtr* or *Loki* for a spurt on the ice. Skating is a very common accomplishment among those who live near suitable sheets of water, but I never saw any display of art in the exercise. An illustration of the flexibility of ice was afforded by an incident that occurred at *Akureyri* several years ago. The frost had been strong and of long continuation, and people were induced to erect booths, &c., and make merry on the ice that covered the Pool. This had been going on for some time when suddenly the ice sagged down over a great space and remained at a level of about two feet beneath the surface of the water that bubbled up through holes and crevices. As may be imagined the excitement was tremendous, for it was impossible to say where the subsidence would stop, but save a good fright and a sound wetting nobody took any harm. Occasionally I whiled away an hour or two at fishing through the ice. Selecting a likely spot, the fisher hacks a hole in the ice about four inches in diameter; into this is dropped the hook, consisting of a bright lump of heavy metal shaped and sized like a small herring, attached to a strong line and furnished with two gigantic hooks barbed inwards. The

whole secret of success lies in allowing the hook to descend repeatedly very nearly to the bottom of the firth and constantly drawing it up again with a sudden jerk. The fish, cod, haddock, and herring, attracted by the shining metal, approach it, become impaled through head, body, or tail, and are thus drawn up.

While speaking of fish I cannot help insisting upon the fortunes that lie in the finny tribes which frequent the shores of Iceland. If Icelanders would only avail themselves of one tithe the harvest that lies just at their doors, there would be no need for emigration, but rather the opposite. I opposed the emigration movement in some letters I wrote to the local *Norðlingr*, and I condemn it still. The Icelandic is totally unfitted to compete with the English colonist; he is neither a capitalist, nor an artisan, nor an agriculturist; he is not exactly lazy, but he is decidedly "slack-twisted," and though he will get through a fair amount of work, he must take his own time about it: in a colony he must begin life anew by learning the language, and he can make but an indifferent servant till he has acquired new habits and put away his old ideas. This Exodus to America has always seemed to me to be inexcusably foolish at such a time; Iceland herself is suffering from want of labour; I drew men from all parts of the island to collect sufficient for working the sulphur diggings; I have seen ships lying idle for weeks, for lack of hands to get the cargo aboard; and during the last two months of my stay at *Akureyri* the fishery was so prosperous that a few hours' toil sufficed to fill a five-manned boat, the produce yielding something like fourteen shillings per lot—one *hlutr* (129) (lot) belonging to each of the crew, two to the foreman, one to the lines, and one to the boat—even at the prices given by the local chapmen. This was the case throughout the northern coast, yet enough men could not be found to work *half* the boats and lines that were ready for sea; and though men were starving in the southern districts of the island on account of the want of fish, and subscriptions were collected among their more fortunate neighbours in

the north, no one thought of transporting labour from one place to another.

The literary genius of the Icelanders has already been noticed as forming one of their chief characteristics, but I did not expect to find playwrights among them, and to hear that theatricals are a time-honoured institution, revived every winter in one or both of the capitals. But the reader must not jump to the conclusion that the island boasts a theatre. The Icclander neither possesses nor needs a playhouse; enough for him that he can suspend himself on four inches of deal in the upper loft of a corn-store, where fur-caps, overcoats, and gloves must be retained to keep out the cold, where cobwebs and icicles form the simple yet suggestive decorations. Under such conditions I became a unit of an enthusiastic and appreciative audience of a series of amateur performances at *Akureyri*, lasting with intervals for a fortnight. The population of the cheapstead does not exceed 800 souls all told, and a fair sprinkling of the company—many of them of the gentler sex—came a two and even three days' journey through snow and frost and flood, yet we seldom mustered fewer than a hundred, a result rendered all the more striking by the comparatively high fee for admission and the repetition of the same plays time after time. The stage scenery left much to be desired, which is hardly to be wondered at when most of it was executed while the artist either just had been or was just going to be under the influence of distilled something—not water. But he enjoyed the monopoly of his profession, and was therefore above being remonstrated with. The orchestra was summed up in an accordion that had seen better days and a two-stringed violin; the singing, too, which was judiciously limited, aspired to the English Sunday School level. The acting, however, was surprisingly good. The pieces included a comedy, entitled *Útilegumennirnir*, "The Outlaws," or literally "Outlying men," a native poet's realization of a popular fancy; and besides this *chef-d'œuvre* were two short farces, one played in its original Danish, the other translated into Icelandic. The amount of attention bestowed on the all-



important details made anachronisms impossible, and the care with which each had studied her or his part, caused things to go refreshingly smooth, while the unconcerned manner of the artistes and the perfect rendering of the soul of the play gave another proof, were other proof wanted, of the great capacity of the Thulite brain.

The weather maintained its Protean character to the very last; thaw succeeded frost, and snow succeeded thaw. We had one or two more snow-storms lasting several days each, but the frost never exceeded the maximum already quoted, though it several times approached very nearly to it. The displays of Aurora were sometimes very beautiful, lighting up the whole heavens with ever-varying bands of coloured glory, now fading away, now flashing out again with redoubled vigour, and crackling like a distant pyrotechnic display. On the 27th February we witnessed a total eclipse of the moon, about which it was curious to remark that the thermometer (Reaumur's) showed 20° of frost immediately before the eclipse; but that directly afterwards the mercury commenced to rise, in twelve hours it was thawing, and in less than eighteen hours it was raining heavily. About 9.30, on the evening of the 12th March, during a particularly fine display of Aurora Borealis, a gigantic meteor crossed the north-east heaven from east to west. It was of a bright yellow colour, but masses of blood-red fire streamed after it. In size it appeared ten times as large as Jupiter, and the light shed by it was so brilliant that I turned round to witness it, thinking it must be lightning.

It was to me a matter for the deepest regret that I was unable to take a complete series of barometrical and thermometrical observations. Mr. Buchan, the learned secretary of the Scottish Meteorological Society, had kindly furnished me with the Society's carefully prepared schedules for the purpose, but the instruments that were destined to that end enjoyed the fate of the Christmas puddings, and came into my hands just in time to be taken home again. There was the more reason to lament this as no set of observations with any pretensions to correctness has ever been registered in the north of Iceland. Hen-

derson, who experienced the mild winters of 1814 and 1815, made a few disconnected observations of temperature, but always at different spots, and Dillon, who passed the winter of 1834 the hardest in half a century) at *Reykjavík* recorded a maximum frost of ten degrees below zero (Fahr.)—which Burton inadvertently misquotes “10° (F.).” There are not half-a-dozen educated Englishmen who have wintered in Iceland at all, and of those, only the two above mentioned have published any account of their sojourn, but *every* traveller has more or less to say upon the subject, and Captain Burton has not neglected to compile their evidence in his masterly work—of course, their figures are unreliable to the last degree, being got from hearsay or fancy. From my experience of the winter of 1876-7,<sup>3</sup> spent at *Akureyri* and *Húsavík* and at various points between them, I deduced the following prominent details:—1. The principal feature of the winter is its length; in this district it will average from six to eight months out of the twelve, rarely less than six, sometimes reaching to ten; 2. it is exceedingly variable, frost and thaw, snow and rain, wind and calm, alternate with each other in a remarkable degree; 3. the frost, as a rule, is not excessive, nor does it endure for many days at a time, but the cold is considerable on account of the wind; 4. the snow-fall, except in extraordinary years, is singularly little, seldom more than six inches fall at a time, and that usually melts away before the next fall comes; during the winter I especially allude to there could not have been four feet of snow in the aggregate at any altitude less than 1000 feet; 5. the wind is far more formidable to vegetable life than either frost or snow, and forms the greatest impediment to travel, whether it be in accompanying the snowfall or in preventing the snow from covering the earth to an even depth; and 6, that no value can attach to any observations which are not conducted regularly and systematically in the same place, and corroborated by precisely similar observations taken under identical con-

<sup>3</sup> I was assured of its unusual mildness, and indeed the following winter, which I spent in Transylvania, was more severe while it lasted, but was months shorter, and unaccompanied by the terrific gales and darkness of Iceland.

ditions, so far as is possible, at many other spots, for not only will the influence of the Gulf Stream at one point, of the Greenland ice at a second, of a huge *jökull* at a third, have a direct and important bearing upon the results obtained, but the aspect even of the spot chosen, its distance from the sea, and the character of the neighbouring firth, must all be considered as important factors in the sum. Baring Gould asserts that the frost penetrates the earth to a depth of six to eight feet, and remains there permanently; on the other hand, Sir Árnljótr, at *Bægisá* near *Akureyri*, assured me that during a long experience of burials conducted during winter, he never knew the ground to be frozen at a greater distance than two feet and a half from the surface. I have already made some remarks in the journal upon the subject of the Greenland and Spitzbergen ice, but one or two points remain to be noted. The flatness of this ice-drift prevents its being influenced to any extent by air currents, and it frequently travels directly in the teeth of a strong wind. Nothing but marine currents will effect its removal from place to place. Usually it appears not earlier than April, and Icelanders speak of two currents from the south-west, one in June, another in August, which appear to be periodical augmentations in the force of the Gulf Stream, and to these they look for their delivery from the unwelcome visitor. In conjunction with this point, I must refer the reader to a previous page (p. 118), where mention is made of a small schooner lying in the Pool at *Akureyri*. That vessel was the "*Grána*," commanded by Captain Petersen, one of the oldest and most experienced navigators in the Iceland seas. From the set of the currents he felt convinced that it would be possible to make *Akureyri* from the westwards, when the ice prevented his doing so from the eastward; accordingly, on meeting with the ice off *Langanes*, he did not attempt to force a way through it, nor to stand by till it disappeared, but at once put the ship's head about, circumnavigated the island, and crept along the northern coast between the land and the ice. The gallant Dane promised me a copy of his log-book, but I was unable

to see him again. However, I distinctly remember his saying that the current set in such a way that it helped him to force his way *with* the ice from west to east, instead of buffeting *against* the set of the drift, from east to west. Certainly he reached his destination nearly a month earlier than those skippers who tried the contrary plan.

I know no country where one is so constantly reminded of the East, as in Iceland. The sandy, stony deserts, the sterile lava-beds, the lack of roads, the tropical heat of the summer months, all recall the sunny Orient, even to the most superficial observer. But there are other traits which, while less likely to strike the casual traveller, are none the less prominent. For example, it is an extremely rare thing for an Ice-lander to drink water, he must always have milk in some form. In the depth of winter, when on a journey, he will not object to fresh milk, but only then will he touch it, and he is particular that it shall be *spenvolg nýmjólk* (teat-warm new milk). At other seasons the Icelanders prefer, like all Easterns, sour milk to sweet. Of this they have several preparations: *súr mjólk* is sour milk, *pure et simple*; *sýra* is sour whey, which is stored up for a winter drink, and is used for pickling sheep's heads and other delicacies; *blanda*, the universal drink at all seasons, is a "blending" of hot whey with water; *mýsu-ostur* is cheese made of whey or goats' milk; *skyr*, which, like the last named, is rather a meat than a drink, is represented by *Khîr* in Sind and Beloochistan, *Laban* in Arabia, *Dahin* in Hindostan, &c. It is the curdled milk of grateful memory, eaten with a sprinkling of sugar or unsweetened, according to fancy. Few travellers appreciate it, but it is invaluable as a corrective of thirst and of constipation, from both of which the tourist will often suffer. *Áfir* (butter-milk) is also used instead of common beer, and another dish is *ábrystur*, curds of cows' milk in the first week after calving; the milk is cooked and eaten warm, and considered a great delicacy. To these Burton adds *Valle*, which he calls fermented whey, and compares with Koumiss: I never heard of it, nor can I find the word in the dictionary; moreover, it has a very un-Icelandic

appearance. Again, Dr. Leared tells us<sup>4</sup> that the desert-horse is trained to live on camels' milk and dates, but sometimes, as it appears, on milk altogether ; and the effect of this diet is to impart extraordinary speed and endurance. The Icelanders do not go quite so far as the Moors, but huge bowls of milk are given to the riding-ponies at every possible opportunity. Then, too, the poetry and effusiveness of the language are thoroughly Eastern ; such expressions as "light of my soul," "my beloved heart," and so on, to women, and "my beloved," "my dear brother," &c., to men, are in the mouths of the people at every moment, even when there is no kinship between the parties. But what struck me most of all was the condition of the women. The members of the gentler sex, of whatever grade in life, are looked upon as inferior animals, as mere chattels, to be taken or cast aside at pleasure, and they receive much less attention from their lords than do the not-over-well-cared-for ponies. Hard-working, patient, dutiful, sober, and clean, superior to the men in every respect where a comparison of the sexes can be made, their lot is to toil and serve, and to bear all kinds of slight and neglect, personal castigation alone excepted. It is a notable fact that the Icelandic wife, even in the highest society, never takes her meals with her husband, but sups with her menials in the kitchen upon what has been left of the repast ; nor does she mix with the guests—her duty is to cook the meat and spread the table. What has been said on a previous page concerning the old halls, seems to point to a somewhat better state of things in the past ; but the suspicious jealousy with which the aspirations of the softer sex have ever been regarded by the men of Iceland is illustrated by a very old law, which inflicts lesser outlawry on any woman found wearing breeches.

<sup>4</sup> "Morocco and the Moors." (Sampson Low and Co., London.)

## CHAPTER X.

## TWELVE DAYS WITH THE PONY EXPRESS.

There was shaking of hands, and sorrow of heart,  
For the hour was approaching when merry folks must part ;  
So we call'd for our horses, and ask'd for our way,  
While the jolly old landlord said, " Nothing's to pay !"

*Lilliput.*

THE first mail boat of the season was timed to reach *Reykjavik* on the 15th March, and the postman with letters from that mail was due at *Akureyri* on the 3rd April. His arrival was looked forward to by everybody with that anxiety which is begotten of a five months' enforced silence between friends and relations across the ocean. But day followed day, a week had slipped by, and we were nearly at the end of a second before any tidings were heard of his Majesty's mail. Of course various conjectures were hazarded as to the cause of this unusual delay ; some thought the steamer must have met with bad weather, and reached the island very late, others feared that some untoward calamity had befallen the land mail, and perhaps occasioned the death of the postman and the loss of the mail boxes in some treacherous river or snowed-up mountain pass. At last, no less than thirteen days late on a journey that is supposed to be accomplished in ten days, the errant post arrived in charge of two stout fellows, who had been sent to complete the stage, as the postman lay ill with the worst form of mumps. They said that the chief delay had been caused by a snow-storm which lasted uninterruptedly for five days, and this rendered the passes so difficult that progress was perforce slow when they could resume the track.

The news which I received from England made me more than ever determined to get home as quickly as possible. I therefore wrote final *adieux* to all distant friends, and packed my few inseparable necessities ready for transport. As the weight of my baggage might not exceed 80lbs., and a number of books necessarily formed part of it, the great bulk of my effects had to be left under the care of my worthy host. On a Sunday morning, the 22nd April, we saddled our nags and busked ourselves for the long ride before us. Surtr being an ambler, I reserved him for the bridle, while for want of a pack-horse I was compelled to subject poor Loki, spirited, trusty riding-pony though he was, to the humiliation of carrying a pack-saddle. I believe his late owner would have shot him sooner than see him thus put upon, and it was indeed pitiful to behold the heart-broken look the poor beast cast at me when Hans, the *Hausknecht*, proceeded to lay the pack-saddle on him, but there was no help for it. In the matter of clothes little change was necessary save as regarded foot gear. Though the Pool was still covered with thick ice, I knew that as we advanced southward we should find the rivers breaking up and in flood, therefore I exchanged my native shoes and riding-stockings for the stout thigh-boots that had already done good service on more than one ride across the island. I also took my huge shaggy ulster, for it would be useful as a blanket and on horseback, though too heavy and cumbersome for pedestrian journeys.

A vast amount of kissing, hand-shaking and emptying of stirrup-cups had to be got through before 9 a.m., at which hour we rattled out of the mazes of the cheapstead to the enlivening strains of a superannuated postman's bugle, a party of three riders with a total of nine ponies. We passed the savoury shark-oil factory whence the markets are supplied with many a butt of "pure cod-liver oil," and waded the Glass-water which was in a condition that was neither ice nor water nor mud, but something of all three with plenty of big stones and deep holes. For half an hour we hugged the shore closely, sometimes riding actually in the water. Here the sun

shone down upon us with scorching power and drove us to unbutton our coats and remove our wraps ; but when we left the shelter of the low cliffs and commenced to wind round the hill that separates the firth from the Howe-water-dale, we were exposed to the full fury of the biting blasts from the *Bóndi* (Bonder), the *Kerling* (Carline) and all the family of the *Súlur* (Pinnacles) that rise to the south of *Akureyri*, and from the *Vindheimajökull* (Wind-home ice-mountain) which rears aloft half-a-dozen snow-and-ice-capped peaks almost within stone's throw of the back doors of the cheapstead. Seawards the view was dismal enough, huge icebergs lay stranded in every part of the firth, heralds of the lurking enemy that threatened at any moment to invest the place and drive the fishermen from their calling, and whose whereabouts were made evident by the thick cold fog that clung to the distant peaks and settled on the waters. Turning our faces nearly southwards, we followed up the course of the Howe-water, through the district known as *Þelamörk* (130) or the Frozen marches. We called at *Bægisá* for letters and to bid good-bye to my kind friend Sir Árnljótr, and turned thence into the Oxendale, where we soon came to the post-house *Steinstaðir* (Stonestead).

Here perforce we supped and slept, muttering many curses on the heads of those who are responsible for the egregiously absurd regulations of the post-stages. The journey is distributed over ten days (reduced to nine in July, and increased to eleven in March, twelve in November, and thirteen in January), and the distance has evidently been divided by a pair of compasses on the map, and a tenth part apportioned to each day ! The first day's stage we had done easily in eight hours, the second we shall see will occupy three days, yet so arbitrary is the programme that we may not utilize the remaining hours of daylight, in pushing forward to a farm nearer the Oxendale-heath. Small wonder that we ate our suppers in a sulky humour and turned into bed with spiteful feelings.

The morning of the 23rd broke with a keen air that in-



spired us with activity, and we set off the moment the nags had finished their breakfast. Soon we reached the Thwartwater, the first of the batch of dangerous rivers that figure in the second "stage," and the recollection of my former adventures here made me doubly thankful to see the little plank bridge in its place. Still we keep in the Oxendale, clad with snow and *svell*, and bordered by towering ridges showing many black spines and pinnacles so steep and storm-swept that snow can never lie on them. As we approach the end of the dale, every step brings us nearer to the much-to-be-respected heath bearing its name, while the track, or rather surface where a track ought to be, rises continually, and begins to be uneven and bad for the ponies. The shades of evening gathered round us as we reached *Bakkasel*, for we had advanced leisurely, the deputy postman intending to make a night march across the heath; indeed, so slow had our progress been, that I travelled on foot during the whole day. But we had forgotten how rapidly the face of the country may be changed by a turn in the weather, and the bonder at once vetoed any attempt upon the heath in darkness. We sighed for Aurora, but all in vain, and I saw that we were "in for" a lodging at this inexpressibly wretched hovel. I had long since learnt the value of the Eastern proverb, "Happy is the man who expecteth nothing, for he avoideth disappointment," and I was quite prepared for the catalogue of troubles that now befell us. In the first place there was no accommodation for our horses, and the poor creatures had to remain out all night exposed to very hard frost. We feared a general stampede to better quarters, for the hay they got was of the very poorest kind, and we could not hobble them without incurring the risk of broken legs or cut knees. The domestic interior was not attractive. The turf walls were innocent of paneling, and mud everywhere formed the floor; guest-chamber there was none, and our host led us at once through a short low tunnel to the *baðstofa*. This we entered by a door so stunted that one could only take a "header," regardless of what might be beyond. The den was not ten feet square, nor

six feet high, yet contained a couple of sleeping benches, a huge weaving loom, a cow which must have been born there, or was admitted through a hole made in the wall for the purpose, a filthy old crone who snuffed terribly and was credited with a *penchant* for entomophagy, and a no less dirty-looking wench who, I believe, was the daughter of the bonder and his carline. So far we had the advantage over our nags that we found shelter to repose in, but there our fortune ended, for neither food nor drink of any kind was brought to satisfy the cravings of stomachs already twelve hours without food, and the demands of appetites sharpened with crisp frosty air and hearty exercise. We could only repeat the consoling Eastern proverb and tighten our waistbelts a hole or two. We fell asleep on one of the benches—they measured about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet  $\times$  4 feet—which was provided with a pillow at either end, but no coverlet, and for the sake of warmth were fain to keep all our clothes on. Later in the night other travellers sought a lodging here, and swelled the number of my bedfellows to five. We lay head to foot like sardines in a box, unable to move a limb, and I mourned the tourist's false simile comparing Icelanders with skinned rabbits. Yet I slept, and slept soundly, despite bovine music in the corner and the attentions persistent and personal of lesser bedfellows who would scorn to be counted by units or tens.

*Hana-ötta* (131) (Cock-crow) found us already astir. The appearance I presented on stripping to wash positively softened the repugnance with which I had regarded my hostess, and led me almost to admire the instinct which taught her to turn to account the edible properties of the *pediculi* who fattened on her more fastidious guests. The aptness of her custom was still further enforced by the fact that breakfast consisted of a chip of dried cod that would not have sufficed for the meal of an abstemious English rat. Even the luxury of a draught of new milk, freshly robbed from the "milky mother" in the corner, did not remove the necessity for drawing our belts still tighter. The nags, happily, had not strayed, so as soon as they had nibbled a small bait of rubbish misnamed hay we laid on the

loads, and at 5 a.m. commenced the passage of the heath. Darkness still obscured the *vörður* (beacons) placed to mark the line that should be followed when snow obliterates the summer track, but our host guided us till day broke. At first the ground was mostly covered with *svell*, on which the ponies could find firm foot-hold by the help of the steel spikes on their shoes, but as we rose we met with snow which, balling in the hoofs, prevented the spikes from reaching the ice beneath, and increased the difficulties of progression. But it was not till we had conquered the rise, and were fairly in the pass, that we fully realized the nature of the task before us. By this time our whilom guide had left us and returned home enriched by our visit. Soon we came to where the snow had fallen to the depth of nearly four feet and which, tiring enough when quite soft and new, was made many times worse by a thick though rotten frozen crust, there not having been sufficient thaw at this altitude to produce the *svell* we had found below. While strong enough to bear the weight of a man without so much as showing the outline of his footfall, this crust yielded to the ponies in circular holes that just admitted the animals' legs, generally supporting them till the pressure of each step reached its maximum,—i.e. when the corresponding foot was just about to be moved forward—and then instantly breaking down and causing the unfortunate beasts to sink up to their shoulders with jerks that threatened to shake their loads from their backs, if not to dislocate their joints. It quickly became evident that to bear the ponies' burdens outright would be lighter labour than the constant unloading and reloading that followed every fall. We hit upon the plan of advancing a few yards at a time with the boxes, and then returning to drag through the horses one by one. Thus we spent the livelong day; the wind howling, the frost biting our fingers and faces, a snow-storm gathering around the peaks that towered above us on the right, and never a drop of water to quench our thirst nor a morsel of food to sate our hunger. For me the discomfort and toil was much greater than for my companions, on account of my ponderous coat and the tortures of thigh boots that refused to

bend at the knee. Sometimes, when crossed by ugly ravines, we almost doubted the possibility of advance, but it was too cold to stand still, to return would not avail us, so that "*áfram ætíð áfram!*" (onward, aye-tide onward!) could be our only motto. Occasionally indeed we might have lain long at the bottoms of the gullies but for the fiery spirit of the indomitable Surtr, who became impatient at the least sign of imprisonment in a snow-drift; and in tearing his way out, left a passage by which his less energetic companions could follow. Despite all our efforts—and mortal men could not have worked harder on empty stomachs—darkness enshrouded us while we were yet on the heath, but the worst was then over. We held on through a dense fog that added to the gloom, and had the immense good fortune to find the *Kotá* (Cot-water) *Valagllsá* (Falcon-gill-water) and *Norðrá* (North-water) all "*æð*," that is to say, fordable. This was indeed a smile of Fortune, for any one of these terrible streams might have barred our progress for hours or even days, as the reader may perhaps remember was the case in Chapter VI. Our drooping spirits revived and we plodded forwards through bog and stones till we reached *Flatatínga* (Flat-tongue [of land!]) at 10 p.m., and were able for the first time in forty hours to slacken our belts and enjoy a square meal.

Bad and difficult though the passage of the Heath had been, we were far from seeing it at its worst. Sometimes the snow is so deep and rotten that sledges laden with stones have to be dragged over by men in order to make a path in which the horses can follow: during a snow-storm it is of course, simply impassable. Several circumstances combine to make this the worst heath that lies on the postal route between *Akureyri* and *Reykjavík*: besides being very long and of considerable altitude, it has particularly unpleasant features in the succession of dangerous torrents that border it westwards and in the filthy poverty-stricken hovel where the traveller must seek shelter at its eastern extremity. At *Bakkasel* I did not even discover a hound, which is the very last necessary an Icelandic farmer can part with. Contumely without end is heaped upon the dogs of Iceland, and not a tourist but complains of their

number and noise, but they are indispensable for 'fee-raking' or shepherding and many of them are remarkably clever in other ways. For instance, Herra Guðjohnson's dog, little Kátr, who was my constant companion at *Húsavík* and the Diggings, was wonderfully intelligent in distinguishing and driving my riding-ponies. I had only to tell him to fetch the "Little Brown," or the "Red Piebald" or the "Gray," or whatever the animal might chance to be called, and after looking at me earnestly for a moment, he would dart off, single out the individual from among his fellows, and by alternately snapping at his nose and biting his heels, would drive him to any spot I indicated. He showed considerable skill in avoiding vicious pairs of heels, too, and instead of attempting to escape a kick by running away the moment he had inflicted a bite, he took advantage of the broken ground like a skilful strategist, and threw himself at full length so that the pony's heels passed over him. He would never leave a pony till he had gained his object, and thought nothing of fighting a dog twice his own size, but I shall never forget his look of abject terror when the old cow at Guillemot-reeks chased him into the *baðstofa* and even followed him there. An anecdote of canine sagacity, which I heard from an absolutely truthful authority, is so interesting as to be worth repetition. A short time after an unusually heavy snowfall, a strange dog made its appearance at a mountain farm. The bonder, seeing it was hungry, threw it a great shred of dried cod fish, which it seized and bolted with at once. The farmer did not take much notice of the dog's movements, however, suspecting that a wayfarer must be approaching his dwelling. No traveller came, but next morning the dog reappeared, and on receiving a piece of fish ran away with it as before. This time the bonder determined to follow and see what became of the hound, thinking it had perhaps discovered some sheep under a snow wreath. He had not proceeded very far when he saw the dog lying on the snow, and the latter commenced to caper and bark on being approached. Close around the dog were a man's tracks, leading to a precipitous gill or ravine some

thirty feet deep and filled with snow. It was seen that the footprints did not return, but continued to the very brink ; a peep over revealed a man lying at the bottom, huddled up and half frozen. It appeared that he had walked over the edge of the chasm and dropped headlong into the soft snow, which was so deep that he could not extricate himself. His sagacious dog, who had avoided the pit, sought out a farm, and dropped the food that was given to him down to his imprisoned master, thus saving his life. The bonder returned home for ropes and assistance, and soon released the unfortunate prisoner.

To return to the journal. On Wednesday morning the postman, Jóhannes, came across the *Héraðsvötn* from his home in the *Túngusveit* (Tongue or delta country), so called from its being enclosed by the *Héraðsvötn* and the *Svartá*. Several hours we spent in replacing some of the most tired horses, and it was 2 p.m. ere we set off from *Flatatunga*. Our first obstacle was the *Héraðsvötn*, the peasoupy flood of old acquaintance, but we managed to find a wade about 200 yards broad where the water only just came over our saddles, and which for the moment was free from floating ice. It was a great piece of luck to find a ford at all, and especially at such a late hour in the day, when a hot sun had already been for some time thawing the snows and ice that feed the Waters. We galloped briskly over the meadows of the Delta Country, and of the *Vallhólmur* (Field-holm)—the Icelanders apply the word *holm* even to a meadow on the shore with a ditch behind it,—always hugging the right bank of the Swartwater till we came to a likely-looking spot for a wade. We tried it, and were rewarded with success, the river was free of ice, the bottom was smooth, and the water not more than shoulder deep. Since the postman had joined us we had dispensed with the second man, but a boy who was going to *Reykjavík* had been placed under the postman's charge at *Flatatunga*. Jóhannes and the boy left us here to go to *Krossanes* (Crossness), a newly appointed post-house somewhat further north, while the other man and I took all the pack-horses but one

on to *Vfðimýri* (Withy-moor). A horrid fog drove in upon us from the ice-packed Skawfirth, and added to the difficulty of finding the way over peat swamps that had doubtless once been osier beds, as the name of our destination indicates. It was close upon supper-time when we drew rein at the admirable farm, which boasted among other novelties a four-wheeled light wagon and a plough, neither of which apparently had been used since they reached their present resting-place.

Here I enjoyed the unspeakable luxury of a bed to myself and a good night's rest, while the fare for man and beast was everything that could be desired. Thursday broke fine and clear, but the heat of the sun's rays was tempered with a bitter frosty air, just the weather for travel. Nevertheless, it was an hour after midday when we made a fresh start, as we could not leave until Jóhannes rejoined us. Thus we had lost two days and some hours out of the five days' grace intervening between the time we were due in *Reykjavík* and the date fixed for the departure of the steamer. The route now before us was westwards, over the *Vatnsskarð* (Water-pass). It began with a long stretch of made road over undulating sand and gravel reaches, fair travelling enough in summer, but now converted into stone bog almost knee-deep. Escaping from this, we struck the *Skarðsá* (Pass-water), and, after following it for some time, essayed to cross it at the usual ford. Bank and bed ice prevented this step, and we continued along the same side of it over very broken and bad ground devoid of the smallest sign of a track. Presently our path was barred by a feeder of the stream, but a shepherd boy told us of a wade where we managed to scramble among holes and ice floes without accident. Passing the ugly lake from which the pass is named, we ascended some grassy heights, and came upon frozen ground where snow still lay in thick patches. After an hour or so, we descended by an exceedingly steep and slippery path into another *Svartárdalur* (Swartwater-dale) and encountered another very nasty and dangerous brook ere we could pull up at *Bólstaðarhlíð* (132) (Builtstead-ledge). Here we had time to swallow huge bowls of *skyr* and milk,

while the letters were being sorted and the bags sealed. We made many inquiries concerning our old and implacable enemy, the *Blanda*, and were assured that above the *embouchure* of the Swartwater it was still bridged by strong ice; but the Swartwater itself, a goodly river, was in high flood, and presented to the view a chaos of icebergs separated by deep channels of churned and foaming water, penned between steep banks, and rushing with frightful impetuosity to swell the volume of the *Blanda*. The ice-bridge, therefore, which had raised in us hopes of a speedy and easy conquest of the great muddy water way, had to be abandoned as a delusion and a snare. Leaving the post-house, we wound round a nameless bluff where an excellent road has been cut, almost overhanging the furious Swartwater. Descending again to the level of the alluvial flats, a spot is reached where a broad shallow is formed by the deposit of materials caused by the eddies and backwaters incident to the meeting of two rivers at right angles, or nearly so. Here the *Blanda* may sometimes be forded, at a point known as the *Hamarsvæð* (74) (Crag-wade), but on this occasion the ford looked even more forbidding than did the Swartwater just below Builtstead-ledge. Thinking matters might improve during the night, we put up at *Auðólfstaðir* (Auðólfr-stead). Since leaving Withymoor the assistant postman had been replaced by Jóhannes' brother, a tall, stout fellow like himself, and the three of us had now to share the guest-bed, which measured little over five feet long and not quite three feet broad, while the boy found a pillow somewhere in the *baðstofa*. Yet we all slept soundly—at least I can speak for myself.

We rose by times on the morrow, but only to meet the bad luck which superstition associates with Fridays. The wade looked worse than ever, so there was nothing for it but to ride down to Holtstead and try the ferry. The sun poured down with tropical strength, scorching our faces and swelling the river every moment. At the ferrystead we unburdened the pack-horses and left them to graze as well as they might on the withered grass roots and the delicate



young blades that were commencing to peep out of the ground, and rode up to the still distant farm. It did not improve our tempers to find on arrival there that Divine service was about to be performed in honour of some obscure saint, and to know that we might wait till it was concluded before we should get a ferryman to 'flit' us. My well-informed friend Herra Stefán (Stefánsson), the occupant of this flourishing homestead, bade me beguile the weary interval with chocolate and cakes, and interested me with a refreshing conversation, anent Iceland and the Icelanders in general, and the river *Blanda* in particular. One point of especial moment which I elicited was that the river was that very morning reported passable for empty horses at or near the *Breiðavað* (Broad-wade), some eight miles or more lower down. Presently the congregation poured out of the kirk, and we at once set upon the ferryman, perched him on a horse, seized an ice-staff, shook hands with and thanked our kind host, waved *adieux* to the multitude, and galloped like demons back to our baggage. The river, broad as the Thames at London Bridge, and in some places nearly as deep, looked wild and ugly. The great stream rushed along with the madness of a spring torrent and the force of an avalanche, bearing on its troubled surface crowds of ice floes of all sizes up to that of a substantial sideboard. Doubly dangerous were the domes and jagged blocks of ice that projected upwards from the bed of the stream, many of which did not rise above the surface, and were hidden from view by the density of the glacial water. This bed ice is a distinctive and most troublesome feature of Icelandic rivers, enjoying even a special name. This name, I am sorry to say, has escaped my memory, but I am under the impression that it was *klaki*, though the Dictionary translates that word by "hard frozen ground." Owing, it would seem, to the retarded progress of the water at the point where it laves the banks and bed of the stream, the frost is able to creep down and convert that portion into ice, while the main body of the water, sometimes even to the very surface, remains liquid.

During the thaws in spring this ice is the last to break up, and the most treacherous to the traveller, for it lurks hidden in the stream when the way is apparently clear. The waters gradually get beneath it and force it up in domes and ridges, which in time are broken up into pieces and dispersed. Such disruptions occur without a moment's warning, and as everything below the surface of the water is absolutely invisible, the danger is not altogether imaginary. Under such conditions the postman sat himself in the stern of the cockle-shell misnamed a ferry-boat, and proceeded to try the river with the ice-staff, while two lusty fellows pulled at the oars. Even while this was going on the flood was perceptibly rising, and the ice floes were gathering thicker. All thought of swimming the horses across here was rejected *nem. con.*, but could we get the baggage over? After an hour's examination Jóhannes voted it worth trying; he had taken some of the pack-saddles with him and safely landed them. It was evident that no time must be lost if the attempt was to be made that day. The mail-boxes, therefore, were hastily handed in to him, and with these he made a second successful passage, then the boat returned for riding-saddles, Jóhannes' brother, and me, the boy being left to accompany the horses, as one timid heart or nervous head in the boat might easily seal our fates. How we watched for and dodged or spurned the floes that hastened down upon our frail craft, and how anxiously we looked for the swirl or bubble, that should indicate the position of a hidden iceberg—one instant's contact with which would suffice to capsize us—I need not detail. That we crossed without accident is evidenced by the fact that I am sitting and writing at this moment, for no man could have fallen into the rapid and come out again alive, nor probably have been seen again except as a mangled corpse, stranded on a sandbank or floating in the firth beyond. The best part of two days, then, had been occupied in overcoming this one river, and that without our horses. I was in too good a humour with my fortune to harbour envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableness towards any

one, but I must confess I could have stood on the bank and enjoyed the spectacle of a select party of Danish postal officials and travellers who sneer at the use of bridges or ferries in Iceland, crossing the *Blanda* in the skiff that served us—it would have dispelled some of their illusions, I fancy.

We stacked our *impedimenta* out of the reach of floods, and shouldering our saddles and the black sheep skins with which we decked them, we commenced plodding through the stone bog to *Tindar* (Peaks). We reached the farm at 7 p.m., and were not sorry to get in doors, for the frost was growing hard and the wind was piercingly cold. Once again we slept three in a bed, but managed to get a less incommodious couch than the one which had fallen to our lot the previous night. Next morning—Saturday, the 28th—men arrived early with the horses and their loads, and we got under weigh at the usual hour, between nine and ten. Soon after leaving Peaks we forded the Laxwater not far from where it issues from the Swinelake. Here and throughout the swampy district we were now traversing wild swans were numerous, especially on and around the pools and tarns that everywhere abounded. The night's frost had been too superficial to effect any permanent improvement in the spongy path, and the sun shone out with scorching heat till a little after mid-day. About noon we made a short halt at *Reykir* (Reeks) close to the *Reykjanybba* (Reek-knob) on the shores of the Swine-water. Here we found bowls of *skyr* for ourselves and a nibble of hay for the ponies, which served to prevent *ennui* while the mail-bags were being made up. We were supposed to have left this farm on the morning of the 25th, but it is now the afternoon of the 28th. By the time that we resumed our march the sun had gone in behind thick banks of clouds and a freezing gale was blowing off the Waterdale-fell. From Reeks to the Gills-water was nothing but knee-deep stone bog which strained and tried the ponies terribly. The Gills-water was easily forded, and we were able to make better progress towards the wade on the *Vatnsdalsá* (Waterdale-water). Though free from drift ice and apparently also from

bed ice, the river was in very high flood and promised a swim in mid-channel. But it was beginning to be a neck or nothing race, if we did not make up some of our lost time before reaching the *Holtavörðuhéði* we should never catch the steamer. Accordingly we tied the pack-horses nose to tail in three batches, and each taking a halter in hand, proceeded to ford the stream in Indian file. The ponies swam in the deepest part, so that we were thoroughly soaked up to the waist, and the boy was very nearly washed out of his saddle, but beyond this we were fortunate. A few minutes' scamper brought us to the post-house of *Sveinsstaðir* (Swainstead), where we hastened to change our wet garments and to turn out the contents of the boxes.

We had rested only a few minutes when Herra Stefán, of Holtstead, galloped up to the door. He had left home about the same time as we started from Peaks, but having been able to tow his horse over the *Blanda*, and being undelayed by pack-animals, he had easily caught us up. According to the post-office programme, our next stage would be Brookmeet, the path leading over the *Gljúfrá*. We had already learnt by inquiry, however, that this river was *ófær* (impassable) on account of snowdrifts between its steep banks and the mass of rotten ice that still covered it. An equally unfavourable verdict was pronounced against the Withydale-water, which we should have to cross after leaving Brookmeet. It was possible to avoid both streams, but only at the expense of abandoning the mails we ought to pick up at Brookmeet. This, Jóhannes hesitated to do without making an effort towards reaching the place, and expressed his intention of remaining at Swainstead for the night, and making an attempt on the *Gljúfrá* during the frosts of early morning. I felt myself under no obligation to remain with the postman, and join in what was nothing less than a foolhardy scheme, therefore, tired and wet though I was, I at once threw in my lot with Herra Stefán, who was going on that evening to *Borg*. We swallowed refreshing bowls of chocolate, and he and I then saddled our nags and started anew. Accounts were

unanimous in describing the Hope (which is the receptacle of the two rivers that were now baffling us) as still firmly frozen and passable on horseback. Thither we bent our steps across the spongy meadows that intervened. We called at a neat little farm near the shore of this great tidal lake to gather what hints we might from the inmates, who would be sure to know its every symptom. An active fellow came out and said the ice was very treacherous in places, and that he would fetch an ice-staff and act as our guide on foot. Thus reinforced, we started at once, our nimble companion keeping our ponies at a steady amble the whole way. We had some difficulty in getting off the ice at the other end, as the influx of the mass of warmer water from Withydale-water had not been without effect: but we found a strong bridge at last, and then less than an hour's floundering through trackless bog brought us to the door of *Borg*, just as the daylight was flickering away. I was amused at meeting again with the young *medico* whom I knew at Greenedgestead, an empty-headed chatterer, who, after jilting the girl he was betrothed to, stole a midnight march upon his host Sir Magnús, and carried off and clandestinely married the latter's daughter, almost out of the arms of her intended bridegroom. In the olden days, such an affair would have led to a holm-going and a blood feud between the families, but Iceland is civilized now, and follows in the wake of England, where we have already arrived at such a pitch of perfection, that everything, even a wife's honour and a maiden's fame, can be exactly assessed in pounds, shillings, and pence.

On Sunday morning Jóhannes arrived, wearing a very doleful look. The *Gljúfrá* had proved to be utterly impassable, not even a boy nor a pony with the mail-bag strapped upon him could cross over. He had, therefore, abandoned the project and followed our tracks across the Hope, and up to *Borg*. Jóhannes' brother had remained at Swainstead, and here we were robbed of Herra Stefán's company, so that our number was now reduced to two and a boy. After giving our steeds a bite of hay and a mouthful of maize to those

who would eat it, we set off from *Borg*, keeping as near as possible to the Withydale-water, in case an opportunity might offer for crossing to Brookmeet. The sun was again scorchingly hot, and blistered my face in a painful degree. Finding no trace of a likely ford, we left the river and struck south-westwards, wading a stream and picking our way over the *Gauksmýri* (133) (Gowk- or Cuckoo-moor). So soon as the sun became low in the heavens, the frost grew very severe, rendering our nether garments as stiff as boards, converting the tails of the ponies into great lumps of ice, and turning the long hair on their bellies and legs into a mass of icicles, which rattled against each other like the beads of a necklace. Presently we dropped into the *Línakradalr* (134) (Flaxacre-dale), where we were sheltered a little from the piercing wind. This name is decidedly interesting, for it reminds us of the time when flax grew in Iceland, and linen was a local production. The *Edinburgh Review* desires that all Icelandic names compounded of *akr* should be erased from the map as delusions and snares likely to entrap the unwary in the belief that corn-fields still exist in the island! Ye gods, what a geographer and historian! Linen raiment was the mark of a lady, and was occasionally used in men's under-clothing. The cap worn by the Scandinavian ladies on the wedding-day was composed, in the case of an earl's bride, of linen, that of the carle's bride of less costly stuff; the bridal gift also consisted of a *lín-fé*, or linen fee.

Climbing out of the Flaxacre-dale, we had to cross the *Miðfjarðarháls* (Midfirth-hause), where the gale again chilled our very marrow. About 9 p.m. we drew rein at *Reykir* (Reeks) on the Midfirth-water. There was a stove in the newly built guest-room, but it wanted a flue to conduct away the smoke, and there was no fuel on the premises save a little kitchen peat. It was a long time before my boots thawed sufficiently to allow of their being pulled off. Reeks was only our refuge for the night—a very good one by-the-bye—and it was necessary to cross the Midfirth-water, in order to reach the post-house of *Staðarbakki* (Stead-bank). To

this task we applied ourselves early on the following morning and rode up stream and down in quest of a ford. But there was so much ice remaining in the bed and on the banks of the stream that it was practically impassable. After several precious hours wasted in useless search, we were at last compelled to repair to the ferrystead at the *óss* (oyce) or mouth of the river some three miles distant. Not only was much time necessarily lost in reaching the ferry, but more was consumed in loading and unloading the ponies. Even here the river presented a very ugly appearance. The tide was flowing in against the stream, making numerous eddies and preventing the escape of the ice-floes that crowded down from the upper reaches. It was a desperate task swimming the ponies across, and many became so frightened that they turned back when halfway several times in succession, thus fatiguing themselves terribly; and the eddies and ice precluded the possibility of towing them after the boat. Altogether we lost at least two hours in crossing the river, and then had to make a great bend out of our way to get the mails from Steadbank. As we plodded over the stony, trackless Rutfirth-hause, the sun almost fried us in our saddles. From some chance wayfarers we heard that a small party of men from neighbouring farms had gathered at *Staðr* (Stead), with the object of crossing the Holtbeacon-heath to collect their horses which had been left to graze throughout the winter on the excellent *engjar* (135) or outlying meadows in the Burg and Moor Firths. We therefore pushed on to Stead with all speed, so that we might secure company over the heath. The pony-seekers readily acceded to our wish that they should join us next morning, and very kindly volunteered their assistance and guidance across the Rutfirth-water to *Melar* (Meals), where we intended to guest for the night. The farmer here, Jón (Jónsson)—the *Dóni*, as I shall call him—enjoys a very bad reputation even among his own countrymen. Mr. Baring Gould, who seldom grumbled at his lot, strongly dissuades tourists from crossing this threshold, and furnishes a reason in the following words :

"The bed was so dirty that I preferred sleeping on the floor, with a saddle for my pillow, and relinquishing the bed to my guide. The farmer next morning gave us nothing to eat, and charged us exorbitantly." I felt too fatigued to examine the condition of the sheets, and too famished to turn up my nose at the fare that was spread for us about midnight, but I have a worse accusation to lodge against Jón Dóni á Melum, and I strongly urge every traveller to avoid him and cross the river to *Staðr*, which is a capital church farm. When we turned the horses out in the morning, we discovered that poor Loki had rheumatism so bad in one shoulder, that he could put only three feet on the ground. Immediately before us lay twelve hours of heath-faring, of painful toil through stone bog and rotten snow, with a bad river to cross at the other side. We were still three days behind, and had nothing to hope for that might aid us in any way, for a traveller just come from *Reykjavík* reported that the steamer had arrived a day before she was due, and would therefore leave punctually, and added that the rivers in the south were in a deplorable state. Loki could bear no load at all, and the rest of the horses were terribly worn out. I therefore appealed to Jón Dóni for the loan of a horse, coupling my request with an intimation that I would pay any reasonable hire for the animal, and a wage to the man or boy who should accompany us and bring it back. But no, he would not listen to me, because he hoped in that way to compel me to *buy* a broken-winded, weak-kneed beast which he offered me at ten times its value. Not only would my pocket not allow me to submit to this barefaced attempt at imposition, but I felt so incensed and so disgusted at this low trickery in one of the richest farmers in Iceland, that I threw him an ill-bestowed coin for my entertainment, and left him to gloat over the silver with a delight that showed he feared from my temper that he had forfeited it. Strapping my pack-saddle and boxes on Surtr, and the riding-saddle on Loki, I determined to walk the whole distance rather than give way.

We set off at 7 o'clock, poor Loki limping timidly until he



began to get warm. The sun grew intensely hot, and was untempered by the slightest breath of wind, so that the perspiration streamed down our faces, and the ponies panted and gasped for air. It was already past noon when we reached the *Hæðarsteinn* (Height-stone), which marks the middle of the heath. It is a huge block of basalt, probably a *bloc perché*, which being conveniently near the precipitous shores of the Holt-beacon-lake, was in all likelihood a favourite place of sacrifice in heathen times. Certainly a wilder spot could hardly be chosen. Here we rested for a brief space, and I found time to munch a little of the dried fish shreds that I had sagaciously pocketed at Meals. There yet remained another six hours of similar *ófarð*, or all but impassable ground, before we should sight the first farm on the south side of the heath. I felt wearied and wracked in every limb by the time we reached it; it is known as *Fornikvammr* (Old Coombe). In filthiness and wretchedness it will hold its own against even *Bakkasel* on the Oxendale-heath; some *skyr* which was brought to me was in such a disgustingly dirty bowl, that visions of tapeworm and other horrid diseases deterred me from tasting it. Thankful to escape from the poisonous air of the *baðstofa*, we pushed forward again so soon as the ponies had finished a mouthful of hay. We had intended to spend the night at *Hvammr* (Coombe), where I made my quarters a year before. Hell, they say, is paved with good intentions; I know not how that may be, but the winter ways of Iceland are paved with intentions that are fated to be thwarted. We were told that the bonder at Coombe had no hay, none even for his own cattle, which were therefore distributed among his more fortunate neighbours. It became then a necessity that we should cross the Northwater at once, and seek some farm on its eastern bank for our lodging. We found a wade after some difficulty, but so deep was it that we were drenched to the waist, and the boxes were half immersed in the water. It chanced that Jóhannes knew a man living at *Hárögsstaðir* (Hárögr-stead), and thither we went. Fortunately he had plenty of hay, and we had no

need to look further. That evening we held a council of war. From the accounts which we heard of the southern rivers Jóhannes utterly despaired of catching the steamer, and was exceedingly doubtful whether I could succeed any better, and whether, indeed, my horses would last out to *Reykjavík* at all if they were pushed. There was just one other route open to me : by taking fresh horses and riding hard I might reach *Akranes* (Acre-ness), in two days, and I should then have other two days during which to catch a fair breeze and cover the 15—20 miles' sail to *Reykjavík*. I have little faith in fair winds, but less in Icelandic rivers, and there was just enough apparent advantage in the sea journey to decide me in its favour, and I at once concluded an arrangement with the bonder by which he undertook to horse and guide me to Acre-ness, and to deliver me there alive or dead within forty-eight hours of our leaving his farm, on decently reasonable terms.

My sea-boots succumbed at last to the repeated soaking, freezing, and drying, which fell to their lot, and shrank to such an extent that I could no longer get into them. I was obliged to strap them to the pack-saddle and replace them by very inefficient substitutes in the form of ordinary shooting-boots. We set out at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, the 2nd May, still keeping the postman's company for a while. Crossing the *Grjótháls* (Grit-hause), and winding through a very pretty country covered with dwarf birch copse, we found a practicable ford on the *Þverá* (Thwart-water), near *Norðtunga* (North tongue), and called a halt at *Steinar* (Stones), an excellent farm whose name is not given in the map, lying almost opposite the post-house, *Hjarðarholt* (136) (Herdholt). Here we slaked our hunger and thirst—for it was a piping hot day again—with bowls of *skyr* while the fresh horses, which were in the moor below, were being caught. Presently they were brought in, uncouth-looking animals enough, innocent of grooming and shoeing, and smothered in coarse hair that nearly reached the ground ; while their bellies, distended like negroes' and for the same reason, seemed to belong to beasts of twice the stature. My goods were transferred, and my two

faithful dumb companions were handed over to Jóhannes' care. Poor creatures, they had become so attached to me that they followed me and answered my whistle like dogs, and, tired as they now were, it was necessary to put them in a stable to prevent their galloping after me. I rewarded Jóhannes for all the little attentions and services he had shown me during our companionship, and as we set off from Stones and received his parting God-speed, I could not help wondering that such an active, energetic, and intelligent fellow as he had shown himself to be, should ever undertake an office so trying, so full of danger, and so miserably underpaid as that of mail-carrier between the two principal cheapsteads of Iceland. Very often the expenses of a journey exceed the pay with which it is rewarded, and I knew a man who lost all his horses in a snow-storm, and was reduced to beggary at one fell swoop, yet men can be found always ready to take it up as soon as one abandons it or dies.

My new steeds were willing and stout, but the clumsiness of their gait, and the faltering and stumbling manner in which they forged through bogs and troublesome places made me cast many a longing after my old pets. Especially in crossing the rivers I felt far from being at home on these dunderheads. The White-water was impassable at all the ferry-steads, but a farmer offered to show us where it might be forded at the risk of a swim. We agreed to try it, but rather regretted our decision on closer acquaintance. The river was free from ice certainly, but the ford was a good quarter of a mile broad, the current was swift and the depth promised more than one swim. Having only ordinary boots, I should be under the necessity of tucking my feet up on the saddle behind me or getting wet through—a nice prospect, if my stumbling, jolting pack-horse should take it into his head to pray in mid-stream. I squat like a monkey for some time, but when I saw that the saddle must go under, down went my feet into the stirrups, and once more I was soaked to the thighs. It seemed as if that wade never would come to an end, but it was over at last, and the sun soon struck warmth

into our chilled limbs. We jogged along pretty well over the spongy swamps that lie between this river and the *Grímsá* (Grimur's water), but here we met with another check. The ordinary ford was absolutely impassable on account of the depth of snow which had drifted under the bank on each side. After a deal of trouble I hit upon a spot where no snow had drifted, and where I felt convinced from the look of the water that it would not reach higher than the ponies' bellies. My guide pooh-poohed the idea of *my* selecting a ford on a river I had never seen before, but I had no intention of losing the steamer in order to please my guide's caprices, so urged my nag to the place and dashed into the stream. When I had emerged on the opposite bank my guide did not hesitate to follow. We held on again briskly till the night grew inky black and the frost stiffened our clothes. Finding ourselves near a farm called *Syðstri-foss* (Southernmost-force), at about 11 p.m., we determined to take a few hours' rest, and accordingly aroused the inmates. Artificial light was an unattainable luxury in this model home, and I was led into the *baðstofa* and up to my bed without being able to obtain more than olfactory evidence of my whereabouts. Sitting down on the bed—*my* bed that was to be—to pull off my nether garments, I felt a body move; next the body began to talk, and was answered by another body in the same bed, only with its head turned the other way. After *Bakkasel* and *Fornihvammr* and all my other experiences, I was neither astonished nor dismayed, nor, having regard to the coldness of the night and the fact that I should have to sleep in my wet under-clothes in order to dry them, did I feel inclined to offer any remonstrance on the occasion, for it would have been both futile and misplaced. Even that natural inquisitiveness which made me curious to *see* my bedfellows could not be gratified, and perhaps it was as well for my prejudices—if indeed, I had any left—that it could not. The worst feature of the interior was an almost insufferable odour, for which I was unable to account till the morning light crept in through the tiny window, when I discovered that

beneath the little table by my bedside stood a piece of furniture, the common property of home-folk and guests, and apparently several generations old—a huge, handsomely carved, wooden ——!

We had gone supperless to bed, and for breakfast we got only a small portion of *skyr* apiece, for the poor people were on the verge of starvation owing to the failure of their greatest harvest, the cod fishery. Soap was as much a stranger there as oil or candles, and I should have been afraid to use a comb had one been offered to me; not even washing water could be had, for there was none indoors, and nothing to hold it unless it might have been one of the fragments of crockery that held our *skyr*, and out-of-doors the streams were frozen. I felt relieved at turning my back on the place at 8.30. The Pass-heath way was blocked with snow, so that we were obliged to skirt the southern shore of the Burg-firth. For a long distance, six miles at least, the way led through birch shaws, now but shadows of what they must once have been. Then, after leaving the *Hafnarfjall* (Haven-fell) behind us, we emerged on a wide expanse of grassy swamp which continued to the *Leirárvogar* (137) (Lair-water voes). Arriving here near the time of low water we were able to avoid a wide *détour* by wading for about a mile across a shallow inlet of salt water. Here I noticed numbers of ponies, and even little colts, standing in the water and eating sea-weed, which they could only reach by completely immersing mouth and nostrils. After this came more morass as we passed the large farm *Hvítanes* (Whiteness), and, fording the little stream that drains the *Berjadalr* (138) (Berrydale), found ourselvess in the parish of Acreness. A bit of rough lava on which some sort of road-making had been attempted led us in among the shanties that form the little fishing-station, and at 6 p.m. we slackened the girths at the door of a fisher's hut.

The wind was high and the sea rough, but rather favourable to our course than opposed to it. Gold easily removed the few difficulties that were created with a palpable intention of "squeezing" the foreigner whom a gracious Providence had cast

in the way for that especial purpose, and in less than an hour I had satisfied my guide, stopped some of the noisy cravings of my stomach, and found myself and my belongings safely stowed aboard a fishing wherry manned by a couple of stalwart sea-dogs. Till we got out of the wick and past the holms rowing had to be resorted to, but when we got opposite the mouth of the whale-firth a racing breeze filled our ugly sails, and we scudded along with one gunwale under the waves. Off the Keel-ness the wind changed again, and blew so hard that we thought of making for shelter; but the wind dropped as the sun set, and for the last hour or more of the voyage we had to depend on the oars. Gradually the darkness enveloped us till our only beacons were stray lights in the houses of the cheapstead, and it would have been dangerous work threading our way among the rocks and eider-eyots, with less experienced pilots. At 11 p.m. we ran the boat's head up to the jetty, and a profound sigh of relief escaped me. Catching up my saddle, I prepared to leap out of the skiff, but my legs were so stiff with incessant riding, and then sitting for hours in a cramped position, with sea-water laving my ankles, that I could scarce manage to scramble ashore. I found that the inn—the historical inn which was kept by the widow of the late Herr Jorgensen, and where Kr. and I had taken our meals just twelve months before—had degenerated into a beershop, and no longer took in guests. But a new guest-house had sprung up, and a new host had appeared in the person of one Nicholas, the son of Japhet, and thither we trudged through the gloomy, empty lanes. I was so completely exhausted with the repeated toil and hardships of the journey that I could only sink into a chair and beg some one to remove my sodden boots. The boatmen returned home at once, and after swallowing a huge bowl of chocolate to restore caloric, and removing the outermost layer of dirt from my face and hands, I retired to enjoy the unspeakable luxury of a clean bed all to myself, and put off a "square" meal till the morrow. The day was far spent when I awoke from my sweet-slumber. I almost frightened myself on looking in the mirror to discover the savage appear-

ance which I presented. A beard not quite a fortnight old stuck out like the bristles of a scrubbing-brush. From those portions of my face where the wool did not grow, one skin was on the eve of taking its departure, clinging only in the most precarious manner, and resembling the scales of a dead fish, while beneath appeared a second of fiery red hue.

My first visit was to the post office, where I found only one registered letter just arrived from England, and another epistle from Germany, which had been lying there since 1872. Feeling sure these could not be all, I appealed to my friend Herra Postmeistari Finsen, and was asked to call again in an hour. This I did, but no, they had not been able to find any more, still—would I mind stepping into the back office and turning over the letters myself, perhaps I might light upon some which they had overlooked! Of course, I did not mind, and was accordingly shown into the room, provided with a seat, a couple of old drysalters' cases were pointed out to me as containing the unexplored mine, the door was shut, and I was left alone to my devices. The interior of those drysalters' cases presented a sight that will never fade from my memory. Letters, newspapers, envelopes minus their contents, and letters lacking covers, were all tumbled in pell-mell, and daubed and plastered over with a treacly-looking, odoriferous substance, presumably some Yankee notion for preventing the spread of the small-pox, which was decimating the little Icelandic colony in the New World, whence most of the epistles came. Such hopeless confusion could never have been designed. Many of the letters were stuck together by the treacly compound in a way that successfully prevented any possibility of reading the superscriptions. Under the circumstances, I thought I achieved great things in disinterring no less than five separate packets for myself, as the result of a good hour's work. Next I sought out the boxes that had been awaiting me since the previous November. There things were even worse, everything perishable had perished beyond recall; paper bags containing tea, and tin canisters holding arsenical soap for skin-preserving had fallen to ruin, and the

two commodities had become as one. Instruments were rusted out of all recognition, and cakes of preserved vegetables looked as if they only wanted a little earth to commence growing at once. In the face of such a bad beginning, I almost dreaded to dive deeper and learn the fate of my plum-puddings ; but curiosity gained the day, and I was overjoyed to find them as good as the day they were cooked, though that day was now since six months past and gone. I despair of inspiring any reader with similar feelings to those which occupied my breast on the occasion, for the simple reason that he or she had not known what it was to undergo slow-starvation on a fortnight's journey of no trifling severity.

I had abundant time for making calls and writing farewell letters, for the officers of the steamers which carry his Danish Majesty's mails to Iceland have a way of taking care of themselves and their ships, and as a stiff breeze blew all day Saturday, it was decided to put off the departure till Monday morning. This just enabled Jóhannes to catch the packet, for he arrived on Sunday evening, looking, like his horses, rather dead than alive.

On that same Sunday evening I bade farewell to Iceland ; to the lovely pictures of summer, and the grim scenes of winter in which I had found so much to interest and instruct me ; to the birthplace of so many thrilling Sagas ; to the home of a language brimful of poetry and a very near relative of our own mother tongue ; to a country than which none has so many claims on the attention of Englishmen ; to a people whose friendly kindness was unmeasured, and that too under the most adverse circumstances. To one and all my most heartfelt thanks are due, and I can only hope that these pages may offer such small aids to gadding tourists as will induce them to turn their steps in the same direction, and contribute their mite of foreign gold and foreign ideas, without which the island will never prosper.



## CHAPTER XI.

## ACROSS THE BURSTING-SAND IN 1876.

It had been arranged that the pony steamer starting from *Borðeyri* should call for us at *Húsavík* on or about the 24th July, on its way to England. We had agreed to pay the charterer of the steamer 6*l.* extra each for the slight *détour*. This seemed a great swindle, but it was the best bargain we could make. On the 24th, therefore, all our traps were packed, and a boat was ready to put off as soon as the steamer appeared in sight, so that she might not be kept waiting. We went to bed, leaving a watchman who was to call us if he saw a puff of smoke coming round the headland. Our slumbers, however, were not disturbed, no steamer appeared. The next day passed away in the same manner. Anxiously as we watched the headland, patiently imitating Sister Anne, we were not rewarded. Another day passed away in short geological excursions along the coast, examining the beds of volcanic ash and lava that are seen S.W. of the cheapstead. The 27th July arrived, but no steamer, and then in the evening a thick fog came on ; the next three days we had cold rains and fog with the thermometer not rising above 50° at any time of the day. At last we came to the conclusion that the steamer must have passed, and we felt like shipwrecked mariners, for we did not know how to get home. On the 31st the weather cleared up and in the afternoon, with a bright and cloudless sky, we had a splendid view of the hills west of *Húsavík*, covered with snow nearly half-way down. An easterly wind, and temperature in the shade 44° F. at 2 p.m.

Now came the question, "How are we to get home?" This is easily answered in any country where one has rail-

roads or diligences or regular lines of steamers ; but in Iceland, with its one mail steamer per month from the capital, it was quite another matter. This was to start from *Reykjavík* on the 26th July and it was now the 31st July. However, we expected that the pony steamer which had failed to pick us up would make its next journey from *Reykjavík* about the 8th August, and we resolved to try to catch it, and if we missed it, stay at *Reykjavík* till the end of August. This would not suit poor F., who was due in England on the 6th August, the day his leave ended.

*Húsavík* to *Reykjavík* was therefore our first stage, say 300 miles, no easy matter at first sight. Here at home, we jump into the Flying Dutchman or Scotchman and knock off 300 miles without thinking about it. In Iceland it is a ten days' journey from *Húsavík* to *Reykjavík* by the ordinary route, but our steamer was to start on the 8th August, and here we were on the 31st July. What was to be done ? Our ponies were not strong enough to be pushed at any extra speed, and yet we felt bound to get to *Reykjavík* on the 8th August to help poor F. as much as possible out of his scrape of exceeding his leave.

Paul (Páll) our guide was summoned, and he said that in addition to the ordinary route there was the *Stórisandr* (Stour [great] sand) way and the *Sprengisandr* (Bursting-sand). On inquiry it appeared that the *Stórisandr* was the less formidable ; but how about a guide ? Paul did not know the road, but a farmer living at the edge of the desert did. Then there was the chance of missing the latter, whose farm was two days' journey from *Húsavík*. The Fates seemed unpropitious. Why not try the *Sprengisandr* ? This dreadful desert, avoided by all Icelanders and rarely traversed by tourists, had been spoken of more than once, but it had such a bad reputation that we were not much enchanted with the idea of having to face all sorts of known and unknown dangers, icy rivers full of quicksands to be forded, dreary stony plains without a blade of grass, sand storms and evils without number. Several of the English bookmakers seem to have intended to cross

the *Sprengisandr*, but none of them apparently till Mr. Watts have carried out their intention, and his book was not published till after our return to England; consequently we could get no trustworthy published information. Luckily we had something better than a book, we had Paul our trusty guide, who had crossed the horrid desert more than once. He said he thought we could manage it, so we settled to go that way, as we could save three days and reach *Reykjavík* by the 8th in time for the steamer.

Active preparations had to be made for the journey, for more than half the route traversed an utterly uninhabited district; consequently provisions had to be taken for four days. Our kind hostess, Mrs. Guðjohnson, baked us a supply of white bread, we laid in a stock of biscuits, and bought a lamb, which was killed and the various joints roasted. We borrowed a light Icelandic bell-tent from a neighbouring farmer, and early on the morning of the 1st of August we thought we were all ready to start. No such luck of course. There were delays in collecting the ponies, and delays in getting their packs. Then Paul and Tryggvi, our other man, could not possibly leave the place without kissing every male and female inhabitant. Letters were collected for friends and relations in *Reykjavík*. Innumerable stirrup-cups had to be imbibed by our guides on the occasion of starting on such an eventful journey. Tryggvi at once became a man of importance: to cross the *Sprengisandr* was an event, and he had never before been further than *Akureyri*. The consequence of the adieux and stirrup-cups was that it was past 3 p.m. before we made a start, a fine caravan altogether, five of us riding, F., L., and C., and the guides, with three baggage ponies, eight loose ponies, a loose pony for C., and Paul's young grey.

We had not ridden more than three or four miles when there was a delay of an hour about one of the packs. They always do go wrong every now and then; a pack gets loose, the pony begins to kick, and if your box is not knocked into bits you may think yourself lucky. As it happened, we were close to

*Laxamýri*, so we went in and said good-bye to the well-to-do farmer, who insisted on our tasting his cherry cordial. At last all was ready again, we jumped into our saddles, and soon got on to the Coomb-heath, where we flushed some ptarmigan. To our left we could see the steam of *Uxahver* in the distance. This geysir no longer spouts, it has merely boiled up since the earthquake of 1872. By-and-by we descended towards the *Laxá*, which was winding through the plain. After fording the *Laxá*, which was here about 150 yards wide, we reached the farm of *Grenjaðarstaðr* (7 p.m.). Our guide said, "You must halt here, as the good people will be sorely offended if you pass without calling." Very unwilling to put up with this delay, and yet more unwilling to offend such hospitable Icelanders, we rode up to the farm, where we received a kindly welcome. Coffee and cakes were put on the table, and very soon in came the Dean and the doctor. Talk about the long rounds of an English country practitioner, his rides are a joke to those of his brethren in Iceland, where the unfortunate *medico* may have to travel for a day or two before he can reach a patient. Just as we have wrong notions about foreigners, so have they their strange ideas about England. The doctor at *Grenjaðarstaðr* said that at one time he was thinking of studying medicine in London, but gave up the idea as he feared it would be utterly impossible to live in the thick atmosphere and fogs of our capital. We tried to persuade him that London was not quite so dreadful as he imagined, but I do not think that we succeeded in convincing him that London was habitable unless for natives. The Dean was a cheery and jolly parson who chaffed Paul a good deal on his engagement to be married.

At last we started off again at 8.45 p.m., forded a little stream, the *Reykjadalsá* at 9.15, and reached *Einarstaðir* at 9.50 p.m., waited there half an hour, and then ascended the hill by a sort of made road, crossed a bleak heath, and descended by a zigzag path several hundred feet to the level of the *Skjálfsandafjót*. It was 11.25 p.m. when we reached the banks of the river. C. here said "Good-bye" to us, as he was

going to *Akureyri*, and Paul showed him the way over the river. It is rather a long ford, taking three minutes to go across. We then pushed along the right bank of the river over a lava stream and about midnight, by deviating slightly to the west, came to a fine waterfall, the *Goðafoss*. The river has here cut a gorge through the lava for some distance; the force is about fifty or sixty feet high, we judged, and the quantity of water was very great, thanks to the fall of snow in the hills. Its form is that of a segment of a circle, and it is broken by islands. The rocks surrounding it are black scoriaceous lava, twisted and contorted into all sorts of curious forms, leaving holes and caverns in all directions.

Though midnight, it was fairly light, but it seemed rather strange to go sight-seeing at such an hour.

On quitting the *Goðafoss* we kept along the right bank for some time till we came to a ford which enabled us to cross the *Skjálfandafljót* without any difficulty, we then had a capital path and galloped over the meadows, till finally we reached *Stóruvellir* (Stour-fields), at 3.10 a.m., and knocked at the door of the farm. How angry a British farmer would be to have a lot of people hammering away at his house at such an unearthly hour. Most likely we would get shot at as burglars. Not so in Iceland, where night travelling is so often preferred in summer. The good farmer soon appeared, and with him some women folk who speedily heated a bowl of milk for us, and rigged up a bed for L. on the sofa of the guest-room, whilst F. was conducted upstairs. On turning into his bed, F. found by its warmth that it had only just been vacated by one of the family. However, after having been a good many hours in the saddle in Iceland, people are not inclined to be so fastidious as they might be at home, and it was noon before we woke up. Naturally enough our start was later than ever; after breakfast at 1 p.m. we walked about and looked at the volcanic smoke curling up from the *Dyngjufjöll*. No craters were visible, but the smoke from the snow-clad hills was very distinct.

The meadows at *Stóruvellir* are broad and extensive, and the

farm is a prosperous one. But in this country who can tell how long such prosperity is going to last? At any moment may come another eruption from *Dyngjufjöll*, or new craters may burst forth: pernicious ash may be showered over the meadows, and cause irreparable damage. Indeed if the wind had been different, the valley of the *Skjálfandafljót* might have suffered from the 1875 eruption instead of the farms near *Hofteigr*.

The farmer at *Stóruvellir* is reckoned one of the best saddlers in Iceland, so F. took advantage of his skill and had his saddle restuffed. At last at 4.15 p.m. we started again.

The road from *Stóruvellir* up the valley was not particularly interesting. We went along over meadow-land, passing the place where the tributary *Svartá* (Swart-water) comes in. The black stream of lava is visible at the bottom of the gorge. There is lava all down the valley, but it is covered over with grass and soil in many places. Very often appear heaps of lava rising up twenty feet, which at first sight look like little craters. By-and-by we crossed a tributary of the *Skjálfandafljót*, and soon reached the lake of *Íshóll* (Ice-hill), looking rather dreary from want of vegetation. It is said to be more than 200 fathoms deep; it may be of glacial origin, but the rocks around it are too much weathered to show glacial markings, at least we did not happen to see any along our path.

As we had made such a late start, Paul said our best plan was to stop the night at *Íshóll* farm (arrived 7.10 p.m.). Here we had to suffer for our late start from *Húsavík*. If we had started at the proper time, we could easily have reached *Kiðagil* the second day, but knowing the poor pasturage the ponies would have there, and anxious to cross the worst part of the route by day, the halt at *Íshóll* seemed imperative. Some people in the farm were ill, so we pitched the tent and encamped on the grass. Coffee and pancakes were soon brought to us, and by-and-by a dish of veal. It was very poor stuff; however, what with milk, cream, coffee, and pancakes, we did not take any harm.

During the evening F. walked up the hill-side west of *Íshóll*,

and reached a stony, desert plain, a dreary place indeed. A little volcanic ash was lying about. Good views of the *Dyngjufjöll* were obtained, and high columns of steam were seen rising up from the new craters. Cold south-west wind, temperature at 9.45 p.m., 47° F.

*Íshóll* is a very poor farm, and we should not have had any veal if it had not been ordered beforehand. Here we invested in warm stockings for sleeping in, and very comfortable they proved to be.

3rd August.—We woke up to find a nice sunny morning, but, as usual, could not manage an early start. Temperature in shade, 10 a.m., 54° F. We obtained the guidance of one of the farmers at *Íshóll*, who said he would show Paul a nearer way to *Kiðagil* than the route he had taken previously. We ascended a little valley and soon came to a regular desert, with some outcrops of columnar basalt. On turning back, the lake of *Íshóll* looked quite pretty, with its blue waters nestling among the reddish-coloured hills. Fine were the views also of the *Sellandafjall*, *Bláfjall*, *Herðubreið*, and the snow clad *Dyngjufjöll*.

We had started at 11.10 a.m., and at 12.40 stopped at a small oasis in the desert, to let our ponies have a little feed. This was a grassy spot on an alluvial plain. Nearly the whole of the ground passed over was a stony desert, with many sand-polished stones, reminding F. of those he had seen in Arabia Petræa. It must not be imagined that a desert is necessarily a sandy plain; we had hills and valleys several hundred feet high or deep, but it is lack of vegetation that is the necessary characteristic of a desert. There is this difference between the Icelandic deserts and those of Arabia: in the latter water is scarce, and one may travel for days without getting any, but in Iceland pools, streams, and goodly rivers occur at every step.

After a short halt at the little oasis, we jumped into our saddles again and pushed on over an utter desert. Roughly columnar basalt cropped out every here and there, and then came spaces where the stones of the desert, originally loose,

had been arranged and compacted together, so as to form a rough pavement. Some of the rocks *in situ* appeared very like *roches moutonnées*, but the markings were not so plain as those we saw afterwards in the *Þjórsá* (Bull-water) valley. In due time we caught sight of the *Skjálfandafljót* in a deep valley beneath us. It will be recollected that we left the main valley before reaching *Íshóll*, and had ascended nearly all the way. A very sharp descent of 500 feet or more brought us to the bottom of the valley, a broad plain half a mile wide at least, which is evidently entirely overflowed when the river is in flood. The valley was reached at 3 p.m., and we then rode up the valley to a place where a tributary comes in, and where the stream of lava ends. This was at 3.15 p.m., and now we changed ponies. We continued our ride partly by the side of the lava and partly over it, and finally, at 4.50 p.m., reached *Kiðagil* (Kid-gill), our quarters for the night. *Kiðagil* is a little tributary gorge of the *Skjálfandafljót*. Here we have the word *gil*<sup>1</sup> used with the same meaning as "gill" in Kent and Sussex, though none of the gills in the south of England are quite so rough and rugged as *Kiðagil*. Good sections of volcanic tufa and old lava-flows may be studied in the gill, and in one place the beds under a lava-flow are burnt red, as if by heat, and no doubt this is the true cause of the phenomenon.

There is a curious natural arch to be seen, some fifty feet high, with a span of about eight feet, on the oasis side of the gully.

*Kiðagil* affords very poor pasturage, and the ponies are apt to stray a good deal in the hopes of finding better food. In talking over our journey across the desert, when speaking of the difficulties of finding food for our steeds, F. naively suggested, "Why not take some bags of corn?" and to his utter amazement he was told that an Icelandic pony won't eat corn,<sup>2</sup> unless he is driven to it by sheer starvation, and that to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, No. 43, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Except the riding ponies who are fed on corn in the winter, but even they will not touch corn if grass can be got.—C. G. W. L.



hope to derive any benefit from bags of corn in the journey across the *Sprengisandr* was utterly futile.

4th August.—On getting up at 5 a.m. (temperature 40° F.), we found a very foggy morning, which did not promise well for a journey across a trackless desert; however, there was no help for it, and onwards we resolved to go, and started at 6.15 a.m. At first we rose gradually, and by-and-by reached an undulating country, desert all the way, though water was passed occasionally.

At 10.45 we reached the so-called half-way *Varða*. There was no track at all to guide us, but luckily the fog cleared away gradually, and Paul was able to recognize and steer by various distant landmarks. From this *Varða* we had a capital view of the *Túngnafells* glacier, lying S. 10° W. (magnetic) from us, and stretching down a long way like a tongue. We had splendid views also of the great *Vatnajökull*, a mass of ice half as big again as the county of Cornwall, presenting a smooth, undulating outline, with few peaks.

At 11.15 started again and rode over desert; nothing but rocks and stones everywhere. About 1 p.m. there was the only mishap of our journey. One of the ponies, which had been ridden for three hours in the morning and had since been running loose, was evidently getting very fagged, and required constant application of the whip to keep it going,—but all to no purpose. We administered a good dose of brandy, and this gave the poor beast a little life for the time. At last it lagged behind so, that F. and L. had got on ahead some way, driving the loose ponies, whilst Paul and Tryggvi were doing their best to keep the tired one on its legs. Finally, Paul came riding up to consult us as to what was best to do. It was evident that the poor beast could not go on, and with hungry animals we could not wait. It was essential for our own safety that we should reach some feeding-ground as quickly as possible. We then suggested that the pony might follow in our tracks, but Paul said it would not be strong enough to ford the glacier streams between us and the *Arnarfell*; it would not live to find its way back. It appeared,

then, that if we abandoned the pony it would die of starvation in the desert, and to save it from a slow, lingering death, L. pronounced its death-warrant, and Paul administered the fatal blow by a cut through the back of the neck. We then rode on rapidly, and at 2.50 came to a scanty patch of pasturage where our ponies managed to pick a few mouthfuls. Very soon we came up to the immense *Arnarfell* (Erne-fell) glacier, and here we had to encounter the greatest difficulties of the journey.

The base of this great glacier or ice-field stretches along for miles, and out of it issue countless streams which unite into little rivers in a vast gravelly plain, and offer considerable obstacles to the traveller who has to cross them. It is no longer the case of a well-known ford such as those by which we had crossed the *Jökulsá* and *Skjálfandafljót*, but here our trusty guide had to find out new fords in a rarely traversed district, where the beds of the streams change from year to year, or even from one flood to another. Paul was in his element, and generally made a very good shot at a ford. After he had found a safe place, he crossed back again, and we had to follow him closely. Quicksands abound not only between the streams, but sometimes in them; down your pony goes, floundering up to his middle, and off you must jump to give him a chance of recovering himself. In all we had sixty streams to cross, all very rapid, and of course icy cold.

There is a fine terminal moraine extending all the way along at a short distance from the base of the glacier. We followed this, fording stream after stream, till at last, at 6.10 p.m. we reached our camping-ground *Arnarfell*, a well-marked group of three sharp peaks surrounded by ice on three sides. Here there was good pasturage. On reaching the hill we caught sight of some swans and cygnets, and tired as we were, the instincts of the chase were too strong, so we rode up the hill-side as far as we could, and then dismounting, ran after the cygnets and knocked over one or two with our riding-whips, and made a meal off them later on. The saddles and packs were soon taken off, and our ponies evidently

enjoyed their good quarters. There was no fear of their straying, for no other feeding-ground lay within miles of us. We soon found a level place close to some running water, where we pitched the tent and discussed some of the mutton we had brought from *Húsavík*.

In due time we turned in, and made our tent as tight as we could by putting the turf-pads of the pack-saddles round the bottom, as a cold blast was coming off the glacier. The next morning we found that it had been freezing during part of the night, as wet socks hung outside the tent were frozen. Still with such a mass of ice around, this was not to be wondered at. After breakfast F. climbed to the top of the peak and had a fine view over the huge sheet of ice forming the glacier, which extended in northerly and westerly directions as far as the eye could see.

The desert we crossed yesterday, the *Sprengrisandr*, is composed of compact lavas and volcanic ash, but the curious features are the flat spaces where the waterworn stones are arranged in a sort of pavement, and often one canter for a mile along a plain which seems as if it had been carefully rolled with a heavy roller. Where the stones are large the appearance is exactly that of the streets of many continental towns, and where they are smaller the ground looks like a well rolled gravel walk. These flat plains are probably of alluvial origin, but the compacting of the ground so as to leave such a smooth and even surface is strange.

At 9 a.m. we left our good quarters at *Arnarfell*, a place where we would gladly have stayed a day or two to make excursions, but onwards we were obliged to go to catch our steamer.

We had to cross several small streams and then rode along the edge of the terminal moraine. Catching sight of a swan, we gave chase. Leaving Tryggvi to look after the pack and loose ponies, Paul started off in pursuit, and we both followed over moraine and quicksands. At last after an exciting run of ten minutes, we came up with the swan, and Paul soon despatched it with his riding-whip. Of

course, if the bird had been in full feather, he easily could have escaped us, but as he was moulting he could not fly far. However, he could get over the ground at a very good pace.

We then rode along the alluvial plain formed by the tributaries which go to swell the *Þjórsá*, seeing various lakes and ponds, and plenty of swans and wild geese.

At 11.15 we crossed the *Miklakvísl* (Mickle [big] fork), and passed over low hills, which may be either old alluvium or moraine, and finally, at 12.10, reached the ford over the *Þjórsá*, just under the *Sóleyjarhöfði* (Sun-island head). Of course, we did not have to cross the river, for we were on the right bank. Another way of crossing the *Sprengisandur* is not to make for the *Arnarfell*, but to keep more to the south, and strike the *Þjórsá* on the left bank and then cross it at this ford. If the river is high, you may have to wait at this place a day or more before being able to pass over, and Paul was of opinion that it was better to take the *Arnarfell* route and cross the numberless streams *en détail*, instead of waiting till they had massed themselves together into the mighty *Þjórsá*. There is something to be said for both routes. We had to cross a host of rapid streams with no proper fords among a lot of quicksands, whereas by leaving the mass of the water work till reaching the *Þjórsá* at *Sóleyjarhöfði*, one can do it all at once and cross at a proper ford, where marks indicate whether the place is passable or not. As it happened, the river was not high and we could have forded at *Sóleyjarhöfði* without difficulty. We now were on the alluvial plain of the *Þjórsá*, which is here a broad and goodly river; pasturage was to be had and we stopped half an hour to let our ponies have a feed. Starting again at 12.40 we came to more desert at 1.15 and rode over a plain of barren alluvial gravel, with occasional outcrops of old lava flows, for a couple of hours, then got on land with a little vegetation, and finally reached our camp at *Miklilækur* (Mickle-brook) at 4.20 p.m.

*August 6th.*—Left *Miklilækur* at 8 a.m., and in three quarters of an hour crossed the *Dalsá* (Dale water), where we saw a

pretty waterfall, and a gorge cut through fine columnar basalt. Outcrops of columnar basalt were common, and capital *roches moutonnées* with smooth, polished, and grooved surfaces were frequently met with. By and by we came on to a high moorland—? the *Skúmstúngaheiði*—with the valley of *Þjórsá* on our left, showing marked terraces of basalt where it had cut through very ancient lava-flows. We stopped ten minutes on this bleak moorland at *Starkaðarver*<sup>3</sup> (Stark-aðr's fishery), where a huge single stone has been put up as a *varða*, or peradventure to mark the grave of some old Icelandic warrior, at all events it shows as a *varða* now; we then descended into the bottom of the *Þjórsá* valley, which we reached at *Skúmstúngur* (Skua [gull] tongues or deltas) at 12.30 p.m. Here we stayed half an hour for lunch, watching the Bull-water, now a very broad and mighty river. After ascending a little hill we crossed a moor and then descended to *Hóllaskógr* (Hill-shaw), a plain with pumice and vesicular volcanic ash scattered over it from eruptions of *Rauðukambar* (Red-combs) about the year 1400. Good *roches moutonnées* were plentiful, and in the valley we came to a comparatively new lava-flow. Ere long we passed *Gjá* (Geow or rift) with a lovely waterfall and magnificent section of columnar basalt, a very pretty spot, and great was our regret that we could not stop to explore it thoroughly. A short descent brought us into a plain known as *Vikrar* (Pumice) from the pumice that fell during the *Rauðukambar* eruptions in 1400. Numerous remains of little craters were passed. We saw *Rauðukambar*, but could not trace any sign of a crater, being too far away we supposed. After fording two little rivers we galloped over the plain, passed some scrubby birch, and arrived at *Skrvðufellskógr* (Landslip-fell shaw) at 3.50. This was the first farm of the south country, and *Íshóll* the last of

<sup>3</sup> *Starkaðr*, or better *Störkuðr*, was a famous Danish mythical hero. The name is a compound of *sterkr* (strong) and *höðr* (a slayer), especially *Höðr*, the blind brother and slayer of the god *Baldr*, the Cain of the Edda. *Ver* (Ang.-Sax. *wer*; Eng. *weir*), signifies an outlying fishing-place, where men collect from all parts of the island for the fishing.—C. G. W. L.

the north country, the two being four days' journey apart. A curious old fellow, the farmer, came out, and after a little while invited us in. He was very uncivil to Paul and Mr. Watts the previous year, and Paul threatened to show him up in the newspapers. This threat had not been without effect and we profited by it. We went into the guest-room, a little hole about ten feet square by six feet high, half filled by boxes and a chest of drawers. On the table were lying some old horse-shoes and nails, and hanging up were nets with sheep's bones on them instead of lead weights. I should have said that to get into the guest-chamber we had to pass through a store-room with dried strips of halibut, dried cod, a hand card for wool, saddles, and a miscellaneous assortment of traps of all sorts, and while taking care not to knock our heads, we had to watch that we did not stumble into the open cellar. As there were far better quarters at the next farm, we only stopped an hour and ten minutes here and then pushed on for *Hagi*<sup>4</sup> (Pasture). Our path led us between the shores of the white *Þjórsá* and a cliff of volcanic tufa. Here and there we crossed *roches moutonnées*.

At 6.10 we reached our quarters for the night, the good farm of *Hagi*. The house was being rebuilt, so we could not get quarters inside. However, we were nothing loath to have another night under canvas in our comfortable tent.

Naturally enough there was no meat to be had, but the farmer said he would kill a lamb for us. In the meantime we had coffee and pancakes as a stand-by for the time. We then pitched our tent on the *tún* and watched the farmer and his son ride away for the lamb. The sheep were grazing on an island in the *Þjórsá* nearly a mile away; so the good fellows were away some time. They had to ford the river, catch the lamb, bring it across the river and back to the farm, then kill it and skin it, before we could have a "square" meal. While

<sup>4</sup> *Hagi* (Ang.-Sax. *haga* = a fence; North Eng. *hag*; Eng. *hedge*), is also related to Old Eng. *hay*, *Hayes*, as local names, and remains as an appellative in *haw-thorn* (hedge-thorn), and *haw-haw* (a sunk fence). It properly means a "hedged" field, used for grazing and not for hay-making.—C. G. W. L.

waiting for it we sat and looked at *Hekla* that stood up just in front of us on the other side of the *Þjórsá*. It is not a striking mountain in itself; a good deal of snow was still lying on it.

On the edge of the hill behind *Hagi* farm there is a high escarpment, formed by alternating beds of ancient lava and volcanic ash. There are fine *roches moutonnées* behind and above the *bær*.

*7th August.*—We started from *Hagi* at 11.5 a.m., and soon came to the flat alluvial plain of the *Þjórsá*, which is here a broad and somewhat rapid stream often dividing into several arms. The broad alluvial plain extends for miles, and it was a very easy road to travel, though somewhat monotonous.

Some time before reaching the *Hvítá* (White-water), the path led across a comparatively recent lava<sup>1</sup> more or less overgrown. We struck the *Hvítá*, a broad rapid stream, at 3.20 p.m., and saw nets fixed near the bank for catching salmon.

At 4 p.m. in a heavy shower of rain, we rode up to *Hjálmholt* (Helm or Helmet-holt) farm, and took shelter. The farmer here is a great worker in metal and an intelligent man. His son, disdaining, probably, a handicraft, has gone in for the law, and is studying at Copenhagen. At 5.45 the weather having cleared up, we saddled our nags again, and for two hours traversed a most villainous morass, a wet spongy bog, and how our ponies managed to carry us over was a mystery. The only plan was to let one's pony pick its own way; the sagacious creatures knew far more about what parts would bear than we did, and strange to relate we none of us stuck in the bog, which seemed at first sight to be inevitable. Here and there were little green farms on knolls, that stood up twenty or thirty feet above the level of the boggy plain, but of course one could not expect to see many habitations in such a locality. At 8.15 we struck the *Hvítá* again, and in half-an-hour we had found the ferryman, and had been ferried across with bag and baggage. Riding round the base of

<sup>1</sup> Probably the *Merkráun* (Lava of mark or importance).—C. G. W. L.

*Ingólfsfjall* (Ingólfr's mountain), and crossing a few small brooks, we finally reached *Reykir* (Reeks) at 10.50. In the south country at this hour it was fairly dark. The farmer was of course in bed, but he turned out, and not having room enough in the house put us up in the church, so frequently used in Iceland as a bedchamber. Of food there was little to be had, and after a poor supper, consisting mainly of milk, we turned in to roost, one on each side of the altar.

*8th August.*—We devoted the morning to an examination of the boiling springs or little geysirs from which the place derives its name. They do not now spirt up very high, though a hundred years ago they rose sixty or seventy feet.

At 11.30 in heavy rain we started off for *Reykjavík*, wondering greatly whether we should catch the steamer after all. The downpour was excessive, everything was hid in fog, and we saw very little save the actual road we were traversing. We crossed a great mass of lava ; at 1.30 passed some craters, and at 3.5 p.m. were at the bottom of the second mass of lava. *Roches moutonnées* were seen on the route about here.

At 4.45 on our left, saw a lot of small craters at *Rauðhólar* (Red-hills), and meeting with a lad coming from *Reykjavík* we asked "Is the English steamer at *Reykjavík*?" "Yes," he said, "it was steaming in as I left the town." This good news put us in capital spirits, we galloped on over the new road, and at 6 p.m. reached the capital. Paul found us good quarters at the house of a photographer.

We changed our things, and on going out ran across the charterer of the pony steamer, his agent, and the captain. They invited us to tea, and very soon we were on board the "Fusilier," enjoying the luxury of some English bread and butter. We were in plenty of time, as the steamer was not going to start till the following evening. Of course one of our first questions was "Why did not you call for us at *Húsavík*?" The captain declared he did, we were positive he did not. He named the day, and said, "Oh, you had no one looking out." When F. examined his diary he found that C. had been on the look-out at the very time the log of the



steamer declared she had been in *Húsavík* bay. We could not make head or tail of the story, and it was not till some time afterwards that we discovered that the "Fusilier" had put into a wrong firth, which very stupidly had been mistaken for the broad bay at *Húsavík*. After observing the way the steamer was navigated on the homeward journey this blunder was not surprising. On the afternoon we expected to sight the Pentland Firth we were all on the look-out for land, the charterer having promised to stand champagne when land was sighted. Every now and then some one would declare he saw the "loom of the land." F. and L. were rather sceptical, but as landsmen were put down by the captain and mate. It had been a lovely day and the captain had been able to make splendid observations and fix his position at noon.

About 10 p.m. a light was sighted. "That's Dunnet Head in the Pentland Firth," said the captain, and we went to bed, thinking that by the morning we should be through the Firth. Great was our astonishment on getting up to find that we had not reached the Pentland Firth. It turned out that the light we had sighted was on the Butt of the Lewis, 100 miles west of where we ought to have been. This appeared to us to be pretty bad navigation, considering that good observations were made ten hours before the lighthouse was sighted, and we were anxious to learn the cause of such an error. After a good deal of cross-questioning we ascertained that the blockheads had allowed their chronometer to run down, and consequently were unable to determine their longitude.

To return however to the *Sprengisandr*. Is it as bad a route as is made out? It certainly is not what Baring Gould and Captain Burton describe.<sup>6</sup> They say one stage is a twenty-four hours' ride without water or feeding-ground. However,

<sup>6</sup> Baring Gould says, p. 222: "As *Eyvindarkofaver* is the last spot of grass which is met with in a journey north over the *Sprengisandr* till *Íshóll* is reached, which is distant twenty-two hours' hard riding. . . ." And Burton, vol. ii, p. 265: ". . . denied that the snows on *Bláfjall* give any rule for crossing the cap of the Iceland dome (*Sprengisandr*), of which one stage is a *jornada* of twenty-four hours, waterless and grainless."—C. G. W. L.

they neither of them crossed it, and only repeated what they had been told.

The only difficulty is in going from *Kiðagil* to *Arnarfell*, a twelve hours' stage with plenty of water on the way, but, leaving out the miserable pasturage we struck before reaching the glaciers, no feeding-ground whatever. Fairly strong ponies can manage this, provided you have a sufficiency of loose ponies, i.e. one loose pony for every one being worked. No doubt we were lucky in our weather; the fog cleared off, leaving a dull cold day, so we were not inconvenienced by heat: there was no dust, and the streams were not so much swollen as they would have been if a hot sun had been pouring down on the great ice-field that is known as *Arnarfellsjökull*. Again, if we had crossed the *Sprengisandr* a week earlier we should have been bothered by freshly fallen snow lying on the ground. This luckily had disappeared before we made our march. We can quite understand that the *Sprengisandr* route might be bad either in very hot weather, which would knock up the ponies and swell the rivers; in foggy weather, where it would be difficult for the guide to find his way over a trackless desert; or when snow was on the ground to fatigue the cattle. As has been seen, we lost one pony, and a small badly mounted party would be in a sad plight if many of the steeds gave in. Then again, this route involves the carriage of provisions and a tent, all causing extra cost in baggage ponies; an expense which is entirely avoided if you stick to the regular route, where farm-houses are plentiful and regular quarters can be had every night. Finally there is the question of a guide. The *Sprengisandr* route is so rarely traversed that a good guide cannot always be picked up, whereas on the ordinary route there is no difficulty on this score. In a word we were favoured by fortune, we had a good guide and good weather, and only had one mishap. In bad weather the case would have been very different and the journey across the uninhabited centre of Iceland would have been less of a continuous picnic than it was in our case.

Icy as Iceland is at the present day, when one-fifth or one-sixth of its surface is covered by glaciers, this is nothing to what it must have been in ages long gone by. As we have already pointed out, *roches moutonnées* are common all the way down the *Þjórsá* valley as far as *Hagi*, and consequently we have a proof that at one time the glaciers extended infinitely further than they do now. There is nothing strange in this, for when we consider that Wales and Scotland formerly had their glaciers, we need not wonder that those of Iceland were once far more extensive than at present.

## CHAPTER XII.

## A REVIEW REVIEWED.

A man must serve his time to every trade  
 Save censure—critics all are ready made.—*Byron.*

IN the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1876, p. 222, *et seq.*, there appeared an article entitled, *Art. viii.* 1. "*Ultima Thule, or a Summer in Iceland*," by Richard F. Burton; 2. *Unpublished Journals of two journeys in Iceland in the summers of 1861 and 1862.* This article ostensibly amounts to a criticism of Capt. Burton's able work, or rather to a comparison of his volumes with the "Unpublished Journals." Had the review ended there, in what may be called its legitimate province, I should have had no reason for entering into what many will doubtless consider a very rash contest with the great northern critic. The very name of the periodical should be sufficient to overawe a mere youngster, and besides, who ever heard of replying to a critique? But the review was not, in my estimation, so limited; on the contrary, it departs from its path in order to throw personal mud at my father, who was an accidental fellow-traveller with Captain Burton, and to run down the sulphur diggings of which my father was the *concessionaire*. With regard to the personal remarks, calling names is but a thrall's trick after all; the sulphur diggings have long since ceased to interest my father; and there was never a danger of any one drawing a picture of their value from the opinion of one who professedly had never been within miles of their site, for he blandly speaks of "the old mines of Húsavik," a sentence which implies a confusion between the place where the sulphur was dug, and the port from which it was shipped, and even shows ignorance of how the very name should be

spelt. In fact, there is so much bungling in these attacks, that they appear to be rather intended as a blow on the heel for Burton than a manly thrust at the nominal offender. There is meant to be a lurking *double entente* in the complaint that "all through his book . . . there is a strong smell of brimstone." But Captain Burton is not the man to need, nor indeed to allow, his friends to champion his cause.

The object of these few lines lies a great deal deeper than to refute insinuations or bandy hard words. Opinions, too, are the common right of free men, and on that point we can agree to differ. But the geography of Iceland and the language of the Icelanders are not open to various constructions; anomalous though the island is in many respects, farms are not in the habit of shifting from one shore of a lake to another, nor does the orthography of personal and local names vary from day to day. Certainly the great fault of all travellers down to Burton's time was the fanciful spelling of local names, the result of jotting down in a careless manner the hearer's *conception* of words that fell from native lips. Thus my friend K. spells *Húsavtkurfjall*, "Husikerfajole," and "Vatnajökull"-Watts, as the Icelanders called that intrepid young law-student, corrupts *Öræfa* into "Euriffa," and *jökulsá* into "jokul-Sá," blunders which proclaim at once an absolute ignorance of the first rudiments of the language. We might justly have expected better things of Lovell's "General Geography for the use of Schools," published at Montreal so late as 1872. This naively tells us that about thirty volcanoes have been discovered in the island, the chief of which are the "Öræfa, Snæfells, Eyafialla, Hec-la, and Yö-kuls!", and that "*Reikjavik* or *Reikiavike*, means Reek, or Steam Town, from the Geysers or boiling springs in the vicinity (see engraving above)," which represents Geysir and Strokkr in eruption! These are assuredly great blunders in a work that is intended to educate the young Canadian mind. But it must not be forgotten that none of the authors quoted above profess to have any *special* knowledge of Iceland or Icelandic.

Let me now turn to the *Edinburgh Review*, and quote a few extracts from its pages. We read and approve that besides the "great literary treasures to which the Icelandic language is the key, that tongue possesses in itself, quite apart from the artistic merit of its writings, a paramount interest for Englishmen as the source whence numberless words and idioms, not to speak of grammatical forms and inflexions, have been derived. The days are happily long passed when it could be asked in competitive examinations whether the theory were true of a Scandinavian infusion in the English language;" and more to the same tune. The old story is repeated of the beauty and freshness of the Saga literature, and once again we are assured that Iceland "must ever be interesting to the . . . student of literature." A protest is filed against the "rush of vulgar Englishmen" (a polysyllabic way of spelling 'Scots'), "alike ignorant of the language and the manners of the race," which "has invaded the island." And later, that "the only satisfactory means of intercourse is the mother tongue—the language of the Sagas: but of this how few travellers, not to mention tourists, have the slightest knowledge. The accounts, therefore, of travellers who are ignorant of the language and history of the island, must always be taken, not with one, but many grains of salt." Finally, Captain Burton is complimented upon the fact that in his work "the native words with a few rare exceptions, and these only printers' errors, are spelt and accented with a precision quite refreshing."

After carefully re-perusing the preceding paragraph, at what conclusion must we arrive? That he who writes a book about Iceland without being acquainted with the language, literature, and history, is more or less of a *charlatan*; and, by direct inference, that the "Edinburgh Reviewer" had a perfect knowledge of all three, or he was, on his own showing, incapacitated and unfitted to criticize the work before him. On the face of it, then, we cannot doubt that in the "Review" itself we shall find every Icelandic word spelt and accented with scrupulous accuracy. Alas for false hopes and

foregone conclusions ! *Not a third part of the native names given are free from blunders*, and blunders too, of every grade and every description. The most common mistakes are the omission of accents—making the vowels short instead of long, or simple instead of diphthongal,—and the substitution of hard *d* for soft *ð*, to say nothing of the universal contempt of the letter *þ*, which may be represented by soft *th*. Instances of this kind of error—often twice in the same word—occur on nearly every page : examples are Húsavík, Krisuvík, Markarfljót, Reykjavík, Ondverðarnes, Olafsvík, Oræfa, Njala, Hunafloi, Grafarós, Olfusá, Thjorsá, Hvitá, Odada, Møðrudalr, Grimstaðir, Reykjahlid, Skútustaðir, Oræfi, Herðubreid : fully a score. Next in point of number, but worse in point of spelling are about a dozen names in which English tail is tacked on to a (generally misspelt) Icelandic head, a sort of first attempt at translation, creditable enough to a Dano-Icelandic store-keeper's assistant, or to an Ollendorffian waiter : these are Sprengí-sand, Skaga-firth, Beru-firth, Fljots-dale, Borgar-firth, Hitar-dale, Isa-firth, Stykkisholm, Reykia-ness, Faxe-firth, and Bergthrorsknoll (Bergþórshvoll). The following seem to be the result of unlucky guesses :—Hamnefjord (*Hafnarfjörðr*), Bessastad (*Bessastaðir*), Geysers (*Geysir*), Kjarlarnes (*Kjalarnes*), Allthing (*Alþing*), Jokullsa (*Jökulsá*), Hallormstaðir (*Hallormstaðir*), Budarklettir (*Búðaklettir*), Myra Sysla (*Mýrasýsla*), Vatna Jokull (*Vatnajökull*). Rules for the spelling and pronunciation of the name *Krafla* are copied from Burton, yet the word sometimes appears as *Krafla*, at others as *Krabla* : right when it is taken from Burton, wrong on every other occasion apparently. *Þingvallavatn* is corrupted, for it is impossible to say translated, into Thingvalla lake ; now *Þingvallavatn* signifies the lake of Þingvellir or Thingfield-water, and I have yet to learn the law by which an *English* noun suffix can be added to an *Icelandic* noun prefix in the genitive case. Even worse is the mutilation of the word *Valþjófstaðir*, which is represented by Valtheofstad. The first part of this word is an approximation to the Anglo-

Saxon *Waltheof*, poor enough in its way, but the terminal *stad* is neither Icelandic (*staðir*), nor Anglo-Saxon (*stæd*), nor English (*stead*), but seems to be a slur over all three. Finally, *Tvídægira* is spelt *Twidægira*, yes, positively with a *w*, a letter that does not exist in the language at all. Men's names suffer in the same manner and to the same extent. *Njál* is, of course, robbed of his accent; *Snorri Sturluson* is degraded into *Snorre Sturlason*. But these are trifling disfigurements when compared with a couple of guides' names, *Stephan* (for *Stefán*; Stephen), and *Kristian* (for *Kristján*; Christian). In the former we have the Icelandic *f* replaced by the diphthongal *ph* which is foreign to that language, yet the termination *an* is more nearly related to the Icelandic *án* than to the English *en*, always supposing that a misspelling can be correctly said to have a relation to anything. In the latter an opposite influence seems to have been at work, for the Icelandic *K* is retained in preference to *Ch*, but the *já* is Anglicized into *ia*. Only one attempt is made at offering an explanation of a name, and that miscarries in a deplorable manner. *Esja* is called "the anvil," a construction unknown to the compilers of Cleasby's Dictionary; can it be that the Norse word, *esja* = glowing embers, has been floating indistinctly in the writer's brain? But that is hardly possible.

Supposing this startling tissue of orthographical blunders to be mere printers' errors, I say *supposing* that to be the case, there is evidence of a degree of carelessness and slovenliness in correcting the proof-sheets that would be sufficient to disgrace the smallest provincial paper in Scotland. But the number, character, and constancy of the blunders, and the fact that they are repeated *ad nauseam* forbid such a charitable construction. What is it then that we are asked to believe? Nothing less than this, That a systematic misspelling of Icelandic local names; an inability to distinguish between short and long vowels; a confusion between singulars and plurals, nominatives and genitives; a marrying of Icelandic prefixes with English suffixes, and slurring of Icelandic



into false Anglo-Saxon ; an ignorance of the very letters that compose the alphabet ; in a word, the absence of even the remotest acquaintance with the rudiments of the language, are consonant with, nay, are special qualifications for the task of criticizing the works of "vulgar Englishmen," "the account . . . . of travellers who are ignorant of the language," and which, therefore, must be taken with "many grains of salt." We are to believe that misspelling the name of the hero of the first historical *Saga*, and that of the compiler of the elder *Edda* is a true sign of acquaintance, of intimate acquaintance, with the "great literary treasures to which the Icelandic language is the key," with "that tongue" which has "a paramount interest for Englishmen as the source whence numberless words and idioms, not to speak of grammatical forms and inflexions, have been derived ;" that this special knowledge confers the right of congratulating Icelanders upon knowing their mother-speech !<sup>1</sup> A hint that "chapping frost" is the distinguishing feature of an Icelandic summer, or an observation that a traveller "came on the Lake (*Mývatn*) from the north-west end at *Skútustaðir*," may be considered as a mere *lapsus lingue* in comparison, or at the most as indicating no personal travel or residence in the island ; on the importance of such seeming trifles there is no need to insist, in the absence of any direct evidence that they are weighty matters in the mind of the Reviewer.

Let us then judge the *Edinburgh Review* by its own avowed standard. If that traveller is more or less a humbug who writes a volume on Iceland, while professing ignorance of the history and language of its people, if *his* work must be taken "with many grains of salt," what will be the verdict of public opinion upon a Review,—a monitor, perhaps I may even say a master in the great school of Literature,—whose lines are curious alternations of self-convicted ignorance with loud protestations of profound knowledge ? And to think, too, that a little canny wit might have saved the *exposé*—for it is nothing

<sup>1</sup> The proof-sheets of Burton's work were carefully revised by two competent Icelanders.

less. A glance at the dictionary, or at the map was all that was needed ; much even might have been learnt from a use of the map that accompanies the very volumes that were under review, and it is not such a far cry to the Advocates' Library, but that the aid of Herra Hjaltalín could have been invoked in the last straits of distress.

Reviews and criticisms are necessary to point out the faults and to correct the errors and misapprehensions incident to all authors more or less ; they are our great teachers and instructors, and it would be childish to complain of the worst lashing when laid on by the hand of an impartial and competent judge. Modern journalism has in fact attained to such a high degree of excellence, that the public is content to listen to the teachings of a first-class publication without knowing who guides the pen, but instances like this make one lean towards the practice, which some leading journals have adopted, of appending the writer's signature to a review, so that outsiders may judge of his capacity for the office, and know what value to attach to subsequent articles from one who has already shown signs of weakness.

## APPENDIX A.

EXPLANATION OF ICELANDIC WORDS AND NAMES  
OCCURRING IN THE JOURNAL.

I THINK I cannot more fitly open this appendix than by glancing at the letters composing the Icelandic alphabet and their pronunciation. This I propose to do in a few lines, leaving out the history of the letters and their derivation from the Runic alphabet, which was in all probability rudely imitated from Greek or Roman coins, for such, dating from the second and third centuries A.D., have been dug up in Scandinavian fens and cairns. Neither have I space here to note the modifications which the alphabet has undergone during succeeding generations, but shall content myself with taking it as it now stands.

The first letter in all alphabets of Phœnician extraction—the Runic alone excepted—is *a*. Simple *a* is sounded either long (when followed by a single consonant, or by more than one weak consonant), or short (when followed by two or more strong consonants), and is pronounced in the first case like *father*; in the second, like *marry*. The accented or diphthongal *á*—the acute accent marks a diphthong and was probably copied from Anglo-Saxon—which is equivalent to *a + u*, follows the same rule as simple *a* in regard to sound (a rule that holds good with all vowels), and is pronounced like *thou* or *now*. The diphthong *au* has a very peculiar pronunciation in Iceland at the present day, and may be represented by the German *äu* or *eu* rather than by the English *oi*. Icelandic *e* is pronounced as *a* in *take*, *same*; the diphthongs *ei* and *ey* are pronounced like *ai* in *hair*, *fair*, &c.; and accented *é* almost like *yet*. Short *i* exactly resembles the English *hill*; and long *í* the English *evil*, or *fert*. Simple *o* is equivalent to *ow* in *law* when long, and to *cross* when short; diphthongal *ó* = *no*, *note*. Simple *u* has no corresponding sound in the English language, and is most nearly approached by the French *feu* or the German *hören*, but neither of them expresses it accurately. The arbitrary pronunciation of the word *Gud* (God) is noticed further on. Accented *ú* answers to the English *root*, *loom*. The same pronunciation applies exactly to the *y* and *ý* as to *i* and *í*. The diphthong *æ*, —*æ* has disappeared from the modern language—is always sounded like the English long *i* in *time*. The diphthong *ð* is pronounced like the Danish *ð*, and is closely resembled by the sound of English *i* before *r*, as in *fir*.

Of the consonants, the following are pronounced almost exactly as in English :—  
B, D, H, K, L, M, N, P, R, S, T, V, X, Z.

F, at the beginning of a syllable = English *f*; but as a medial and final it is

pronounced *v* (except in some foreign names). In modern Icelandic pronunciation—*f* before *l* or *n* = *b* or *p*; e. g. *Hafn*, pron. *hapn*; *Krafla*, pron. *Krabla*.

G is hard as an initial before a hard vowel, before a consonant, as a final after consonants and when double; soft sometimes as a final or medial, but altogether lost or absorbed when between two soft vowels, or even followed only by a soft vowel or *j*; and aspirate as an initial before *j* or a soft vowel. Between two consonants, and before *l* and *n*, *g* is not pronounced.

*Hv* = *wh*; *J* = *i* or *y*, and is never pronounced like the English or French *j*; *Kv* = *qu*; *LL* = *dlh* or *tlh*; *NN* after diphthongs = *dnk* or *tnk*.

P, as an initial letter is entirely foreign to Icelandic as to Anglo-Saxon and Gothic. Ulfilas contains only seven words beginning with *p*. Beowulf has none, and only very few, principally of Gaelic and Chadic or Finnish origin, appear in the earliest Icelandic *Sögur*. There is no *ph* diphthong.

Q made its entry into the language in the compound *qu*, under Latin influence, but afterwards disappeared and is represented by *Kv*.

Rl = *tlh*, and rn = *tnk*.

Two English letters, *c* and *w*, are excluded from the alphabet. As the Anglo-Saxon imitated the Latin by using *c* for *k*, so some of the early Icelandic manuscripts written in Britain, or influenced by Anglo-Saxon, adopted the same plan; but the intruder never gained a firm footing, and now only remains in a very few foreign (principally Latin) words. *W* was not quite ignored in the Icelandic vellums, but its pronunciation must have been lost before the colonization of Iceland, and the letter is now quite fallen into disuse.

On the other hand, Icelandic possesses two consonants to represent the dual pronunciation of the English diphthong *th*. Ð, ð = the soft *th* in *father*, &c., and is never used at the beginning of words; Þ, þ = the hard *th* in *think*, and occurs only as the initial letter of distinct syllables.

1. Öröfajökull. The old sense of *öröfi* was a harbourless coastland. *Jökull* is probably a diminutive of *jakt*, a lump of ice, now commonly applied to icebergs. (Ang.-Sax. *gicel*, i. e. *is-gicel*, whence our *icicle*. In Low. Germ. *jokel* = an icicle.) In specific Icelandic sense, it means a glacial mountain or permanent glacier, and this signification "the Icelanders probably borrowed from the Norse county Hardanger, which is the only county of Norway in which *jökull* appears as a local name." (Cleasby.) This authority considers that the meaning *icicle* is quite lost in Iceland, but certainly I have heard men speak of the land as being covered with *jökull*, though doubtless *sveil* is more commonly used.

2. Laxá : *d*, Ang.-Sax. *el*, Lat. *aqua*, Fr. *eau*, Eng. *ax*, *ex*- (in compound names). The original sense is water, but it is now universally applied to a river, and occurs in a vast number of local names as the final letter.

3. Botnsvatn. *Botn* (Ang.-Sax. *botm*), a bottom; in the plural *botnar* it signifies bays. *Vatn*, old forms *vatz* or *vaz* and *vatr*,—the last only occurs twice (Ang.-Sax. *wæter*) = water, freshwater. In comp. it means a *lake* (cp. Ulleswater, &c.), the full word being *stöðuvatn*, lit. *standing water*.

4. Reykjahlíð. *Reykr* (Ang.-Sax. *reke*, Scot. *reek*, *reik*, Eng. *reek*). In Icelandic local names, *Reykir*, and compounds with *Reykjar*—(sing.), and *Reykja*—(plur.), are commonly applied to places where hot springs exist. *Hlíð* (Ang.-Sax. *hlif*, Norse *li*) = a slope or mountain side.

5. Námar : sing. *námi* or *náma*. Cleasby translates it *pit*, *mine*, and gives no information concerning it. The only application of the word in Iceland is to the

sulphur-diggings, and to these it is specially referable, though also applied to real mines, as of coal, &c., of other countries.

6. *Krafla* (pron. *krabla*). The verb *að*— means to paw or scabble, to crawl out of a strait, e. g. used of an exposed infant who paws the snow away from its face. Capt. Burton has wittily connected the name with scratching, which is, however, a very forced signification.

7. *Fremri* is the comp. of *fram*, further, which is somewhat confusingly applied. Thus *fram á sjó* = out to sea, while *fram á dal* = up the dale, opposed to *ofan dalinn* = down the dale. Here it evidently means further towards the interior of the country in comparison with the *Hlíðar-námar*.

8. *Tún*. (Ang.-Sax. *tūn*, Eng. *town*.) The word is widely applied and is common to all the Teutonic languages. Its proper signification is a *hedge*, hence an enclosed spot wherein a house is built. The sense of hedge still exists in the German *Zaun*, but in Scandinavia the only remnant of it is to be seen in the Icelandic *tún-riða* = hedge-rider, a name given to ghosts, as they were popularly supposed to ride at night on the hedges and houses. The ancient Scandinavians, like other old Teutonic peoples, had no *towns*. In Iceland at the present day, there are only two settlements worthy of the name, and the larger of these—*Reykjavík*—consisted of an isolated farm-house less than a century and a half ago. In specific language the *tún* now means the in-field or home meadow, the patch not exceeding a score of acres which alone receives any manurial dressing.

9. *Þúfa* (sing.) = a mound. Compare the provincial German *Daube*, and the wayside cairns and pyramids in the Tyrol.

10. *Fylgi-maðr*: *að fylgja* (Ang.-Sax. *folgjan*) to follow. *Fylgja* in the heathen age was a guardian angel, a feminine guardian spirit, whose appearance foreboded death. *Fylgi-kona* = a concubine, and was applied to the mistresses of the clergy before the Reformation. *Að fylgja konu* means to elope with a woman, an offence that was punishable with lesser outlawry even in the case of accomplices.

11. *Surtarbrandr*. *Surt* (from *svartr*) gen. *Surts* or *Surtar* = the Black, the name of a fire giant, the world-destroyer. *Surtarbrandr* = Surt's brand, applied to jet or lignite.

12. *Höfuð* (dat. *höfði*), Ang.-Sax. *hefod*, Eng. *head*, is very common in compound local names, signifying a *headland*.

13. *Kvísl* = a fork, from the verb indicating to *branch out*, especially of a tree, hence metaphorically the noun means the fork of a river. A table-fork is called *borð-kvísl* = board-fork.

14. *Skeifr* = Eng. skew, askew. In modern times it has become adopted for a horse-shoe, which the ancients designated simply *skór* = shoe, now used only for men's shoes.

15. *Kambr* (Ang.-Sax. *kamb*, Eng. *comb*) = a crest or ridge of hills.

16. *Hákarl*. Probably this may be a contraction for *hákr-karl*, as *hákr* in compounds signifies gluttonous, though properly a noun, the name of a species of fish, perhaps the hake. *Karl* (Ang.-Sax. *carl*, *ceorl* = a low country-fellow, Eng. *carle*, *charl*) = a man, as opposed to a woman. The word is common to all the Teutonic languages. The fem. *kerling*, with the rarer form *karlinna* (akin to Caroline, as *kari* to Charles, Carolus, &c.), is almost always used like the Scotch *carline* of an old woman. *Kona* and *kuna* (Ang.-Sax. *cwen*, Eng. *quien*—the Scotch *quean* = wench) are better words for a woman, and compounds with the gen. plu. *kvenna* are very numerous. A masc. form *konr* = a high-born man, was

used by poets of the tenth and eleventh centuries, but has fallen out of practice; possibly *konungr* (Ang.-Sax. *cynig*, and many other forms) = king, is thus derived, though Cleasby does not favour the supposition.

17. *Dyngja* means a lady's bower or boudoir (Ang.-Sax. *dyng*). In the old Icelandic dwellings it was evidently detached and distinct from the *stofa*, and Cleasby thinks that it may be akin to the word *dungeon*, from the fact that each was a secluded inner apartment in the house or castle.

18. *Mýri*, older form *mýrr* (Eng. *moor* and  *mire*) = bog, swamp.

19. *Miklavatn*. *Mikill* (Ang.-Sax. *mycel*, Scot. and N.-Eng. *muckle* and *mickle*, Eng. *muck*) = great, and is used in many compounds, as *mikil-brjóstðr*, (*lit.* muckle-breasted) = stout-hearted, *Mikligarðr*, (*lit.* Mickle-garth) = Constantinople.

20. *Hraunkot*. *Hraun* signifies a rough place and hence has come to be universally applied to the lava beds of Iceland and to the molten stone even in its liquid state. It is akin to *hrjóna* (old Eng. *royne*) = a scab; *royneous* and *roynish* (Shakespeare and Chaucer) indicate roughness. An old word, *hrjónungr*, was especially used of flaws in the ice. Further it is related to *að hrynja*, to fall to ruin, also to stream or pour down, of blood, tears, water, etc.; and to *hrjúfr* (Ang.-Sax. *hreo* = scabby), Eng. rough, rugged; *hrjóstr*, a barren rocky place; and *hreyri* = a heap of stones, compare Dunmail Raise (i.e. Dunmail's cairn) in Westmoreland. *Kot* (Ang.-Sax. *cote*, Eng. *cot*) = a small farm.

21. *Skurð* (Ang.-Sax. *sceard*, Eng. *shard*) = a notch or chink, and hence a mountain pass. Compare the Cumbrian *Scarf-gap* and Scarborough = *Skarðaborg*.

22. *Ásberg*. *Ás* or *Áss* = *deus*; the *Ásar* were the heathen gods in general, of whom the *Ás par excellence* was *Þórr* (Thor), and the prefix *Ás* which occurs so frequently in proper names (even in English names as Osborn, Oswald, etc.), refers generally rather to Thor than to Odin. *Berg* (Ang.-Sax. *biork*) = a mountain boulder or rock.

23. *Grjótháls*. *Grjót* (Ang.-Sax. *greot*, Eng. *grit*) = gravel or shingle. Probably also the technical word "grout" is from the same root. Giants are sometimes called the people of the stone age—*grjót-öld*. *Háls*, properly *hals* (Gothic, Ang.-Sax., etc., *hals*, N.-Eng. *hause*) = the neck, whence a hill ridge (Lat. *collis*.)

24. *Skógr* (N.-Eng. and Scot. *shaw* or *shaw*) = a shaw or wood, not a forest.

25. *Gjá* (Scot. *geo*, *geow*) = a chasm or rift, a common feature of Icelandic geography.

26. *Hafr* (Ang.-Sax. *hafer*, Eng. *heifer*) = a buck, he-goat.

27. *Hvammr* is a grassy slope or vale, probably akin to our local word *coomb* or *comb*.

28. *Vogar*. *Vogr* or *vágr* (Ang.-Sax. *wæg*, Eng. *wave*, *way*) = a wave, but that sense is now obsolete, and it is applied only to a bay or inlet, like the *vœ* of Shetland.

29. *Staðr*, from *að standa*, to stand; (Ang.-Sax. *stæð*, Eng. *stead*) = place, abode, stead; also a church see. In the latter sense it has been added to many local names, for example *Melstaðr* was originally *Melr* in the old name of the heathen age, but in this case the word is always used in the sing. *staðr* or gen. *staðar*, but the plu. *staðir* occurs in numerous local names dating from heathen times.

30. *Búr* (Ang.-Sax. *bûr*, Eng. *bower*, Scot. and N.-Eng. *byre*) is common to all Teutonic languages, and in most denotes *chamber*. The Scot. and N.-Eng. *byre*, however, means a *cowstall*, and in Iceland only is the word used in the sense of *larder*.

31. Ódáða. Ó or ú is the negative prefix signifying *un-, im-, not*, placed before nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and of unlimited use. *Dáf*, (Ang.-Sax. *dad*, Eng. *deed*) = a deed or action, hence *ú-dáfir* (plu.) = misdeeds, outrages, and *Ó-, Ú-dáða-hraun* = the Lava bed of misdeeds, from the popular idea that it was and is tenanted by outlawed miscreants.

32. Hella. *Hella* = a flat stone or slate. *Vað*, (Ang.-Sax. *wad*) a ford, from *að vaða* (*wadan*) to wade, through water or snow, and used even of the moon passing through clouds. It is curious that the German form (*Furth*) is unknown in Icelandic, and that in English we have no noun corresponding with *vað* but only with *Furth*.

33. Úlfær. Úlfr (Ang.-Sax. *wulf*, Eng. and Germ. *wolf*, N.-Eng. *ulv* in proper names) = wolf: thus *Ulverston* (*Ulpha*). It is common in Icelandic men's names in the form *ólfr*, as *Bjólfr* = *Bý-ulfr*, (Ang.-Sax. *Bee-wulf*) = Bee-wolf, that is honey-thief, the name of the bear from popular tales. *Bær* (Dan. and Swe. *by*) from the root *að búa* (Goth. *bilan*, Germ. *bauen*), comp. N.-Eng. *to big* and *to boun*. In the Norse, Swe., and Dan. notion it means a town or village, but as towns are wanting in Iceland it is applied to individual farms. Many are the English local names in -by where the Scandinavians settled.

34. Goðafoss. *Goð* (Ang.-Sax. *godu*, Eng. *god*) is common to all the Teutonic languages. In Iceland it was originally applied to the gods or the godhead, and the form still remains in reference to the heathen deities, but after the introduction of Christianity, the spelling was changed to *Guð* (for the Almighty) and the pronunciation gradually became *gumið*. *Goði* also was a priest, and hence a liege lord of the Icelandic Commonwealth, and the *foss* may be so named in connexion with an early resident at the important neighbouring farm, *Ljósavatn*. It is perhaps irreverent, but at least it is interesting to note how much more difficult of pronunciation is the Christian synonym for the Deity than the heathen form, and all the appellatives of his Satanic majesty with which I am acquainted are simplicity itself compared with *Guð*. It rhymes with no other word in the language.

35. Vaðlahciði. *Vaðill* and *vöðull* (Shetland *vaadle*), from the root *að vaða* (*vide* 32 ante), signifies a shallow water where firths can be crossed on horseback, and such a shallow exists in the firth that fringes this *heiði*.

36. Sprengisandr. *Að sprengja* (Ang.-Sax. and Germ. *sprengen*) = to make burst;—*hest* = to ride a horse to death. Shrove Tuesday is called *Sprengi-kveld* or *kvöld* = bursting eve, from the habit of over-eating at that time.

37. Glerá. Perhaps so-called from the Gaelic *glas* = dark grey: certainly there is nothing glassy in its appearance, and the name is puzzling.<sup>1</sup>

38. Oddeyrí. *Oddr* (Ang.-Sax. *ord*) = a point, also of land, but *oddi* is more properly a triangle or promontory of land.

39. Gjöf (Ang.-Sax. *giftu*, *geofu*) = a gift, as applied to material gifts, while *gáfa* denotes Nature's gifts: *gáfaðr maðr* = a gifted man.

40. Hörg (Ang.-Sax. *hearg*) = a heathen place of worship. The *hof* was a house of timber, but the *hörg* an altar of stone, erected on high places, or a sacrificial cairn built in open air and without images, for the *hörg* itself was to be stained with the blood of the sacrifice. The notion of a high place still remains in such expressions as "*Það eru ekki uppi nema hæstu hörgar*"—only the highest

<sup>1</sup> The original meaning of *gler* is amber, but there is nothing in the features of the river to justify its being called Amber-water.

points are above. Another word is *haugr*, (N.-Eng. *Howe*), a kind of sacrificial mound.

41. *Drangr* = a lonely upstanding rock, in popular lore supposed to be petrified giants.

42. *Bakkasel*. *Bakki* = Eng. and Germ., *bank*. *Sel*, for an obsolete form *sali*, akin to *salr*, (Ang.-Sax. *sele*) = a shed on a mountain pasturage where milch kine and sheep are kept in summer. A purely Icelandic word: such huts in Norway are called *seter*. *Salr*, (Ang.-Sax. *selða*) = a saloon, and occurs in many compounds.

43. *Valugilsá*. *Valr* is probably a contraction for *val-haukr*, from *valr*, (Ang.-Sax. *wæl* or *walre*) = the slain. *Gil*, (*ghyll* or *gill*, in Scot.-and N.-Eng. local names) = a ravine with a rivulet flowing at the bottom.

44. *Héraðsvötn*. *Hérað* or *hierat*, from *herr*, a host = a county or district. Perhaps the old Eng. and Scot. term *heriot* is connected with this word, when possibly the original sense of *hérað* might have been a tax in lieu of military service.

45. *Mælifell*, from *mál*, (Ang.-Sax. *māl*, Eng. *meal*) = measure, root *að mæla*.

46. *Aðalmaðr*. *Aðal* (Ang.-Sax. *ædele* = noble, old Eng. and Scot. *ethel*) = chief, head; *maðr* = man.

47. *Sauðr* = a sheep, properly a wether in modern usage. (*Ufilas*, *sauks* or *sauðs* = a sacrifice, which is thus shown to be the original sense of the word. *Sjóða* and *seyðir* are kindred words, thus *seyðir* (cp. Ang.-Sax. *seðr*) = a cooking fire, whence *Seyðisfjörður* on the E. coast of the island. (Cleasby.)

48. *Hæð* (Ang.-Sax. *heahðo*, Eng. height) = height.

49. *Arnarvatnsheiði*. *Örn*, (Ang.-Sax. *earn*, Chaucer, *erne*) = an eagle. *Heiði*, (Ang. Sax. *hæð*) = a heath. The word is of constant recurrence in Iceland, and is especially applied to the stony barren upland wastes that disfigure the country in all directions. Scarce a day's journey can be made in any district without crossing one or more *heiðar*.

50. *Balljökull*. It is difficult to explain this name, unless it should be from *ballr*, (Ang.-Sax. *beald*, Eng. *bold*).

51. *Búð* = booth, and is not from the root *að búa*, but indicates a temporary abode as opposed to *búi*, a permanent dwelling (Cleasby). The word exists in almost identical form even in many Eastern languages and in all seems to indicate a temporary character. The word *búð* in Iceland can now only be applied to a shop; originally the only shops were booths, erected at the Althing, hence the change of signification.

52. *Surtshellir*, or *hellir* *Surts*. *Hellir* = a cave in the rocks, and the Shetland *halier* or *høyer* = a subterranean cavern into which the tide flows as it rises.

53. *Strútr*. Thus was the name explained to me by my well-informed companion. I suspect, however, that it is to be more correctly derived from *strútr*, a sort of hood, jutting out like a horn, (Eng. *strut*), though undoubtedly our own word ostrich (Lat. *avis-struthio*) is closely akin to it. *Að hafa strút á höfðinu* = to wear a handkerchief around the head, as old women do at the present day in Iceland.

54. *Túnga*, a word common to all the Teutonic languages, means a tongue and hence a delta.



55. Borg (Ang.-Sax. *burg*, *burh*, *byrig*, Eng. *borough*, *burg*), from the root *að byrgja*, to enclose = a castle or fort. It is connected with *berg*, a hill and *ad bjarga*, to save, defend, castles being generally built on hills and always for purposes of defence. A small dome-shaped hill has thus come to be so called.

56. Hryggr (Ang.-Sax. *hrycg*, Eng. *rigg*, *ridge*), properly the back or spine, hence metaph. a hill ridge.

57. Kaldidair. *Kaldr* (Ang.-Sax. *ceald*, Eng. *cold*), is common to all the Teutonic languages. *Dair* (Ang.-Sax. *dæl*) = dale, and probably also dell.

58. Fanntófell. *Fantr* = a vagabond. It is applied to gipsies by the Norwegians and is connected with Ital. *fanti*, a footman, whence it has come to mean a foot-soldier (infantry), in all European languages.

59. Brunnr (Ang.-Sax. *bærne*, Scot. and N.-Eng. *burn*) = a spring or well.

60. Sæluhús. *Sæla* (Ang.-Sax. *sæl*, *sæld*) is a common Teutonic word signifying bliss, happiness. *Hús* (Ang.-Sax., Old H. Germ., Dan. and Swe. *hús*) = house. *Sæluhús* = a hospice in the desert.

61. Tröll, old form Tröll = a giant or fiend in the generic term, but the Icelandic *troll* was applied to Titans or giants, mostly evil, but also good.

62. Ármaðr = a steward, esp. of Royal estates in Denmark, Sweden, &c. The word occurs very rarely in Iceland, where neither kings nor earls have flourished.

63. Baðstofn. *Bað* (Ang.-Sax. *bāð*) = bath. The common sleeping and living room of to-day occupies the place of the bath-room of a past age and has retained the name, though tubbing has so far gone out of fashion that I know of only two baths in the island, and they are in the hospitals. The Gothic word is not preserved, but was probably *baþ*; Ang.-Sax. *bāð*, plu. *baðe*. Perhaps related to Latin *balneum* (? *badneum*), and Greek *βάπτω*. The word sounds foreign to Icelandic ears.

64. Varmá. *Varnr* (Ang.-Sax. *wearm*) = warm, and is distinct from *heitr*, (Ang.-Sax. *hāt*, Eng. *hot*). It is replaced in modern usage by *válgr* or better *valgr*. King Alfred uses *wealgh* = warm in a single instance only, and the word is not mentioned by Bosworth.

65. Sog, from *sulga*, better *súga* (Ang.-Sax. *súcan*) = to suck.

66. Bæli (Norse *byli* = a dwelling). *Bol*, another form (Ang.-Sax. *bol* and *bolt*, Eng. *build*), is obsolete and only remains in local names.

67. Hekla. Authors unacquainted with the language and despising the map spell it *Hecla*, and other barbarous forms, oblivious or ignorant of the fact that the letter *c* was erased from the Icelandic alphabet about the time of the Reformation, and never had any but a precarious existence in the language. *Hekla* signifies a cowed or hooded frock, knitted of divers colours, and is akin to *hökull*, (Ang.-Sax. *hacela*) = a priest's cope. The proper full name of the mountain is *Hekluhfjall*, and it was doubtless so named from its snow cape. In the Middle Ages it became mystical in Europe, and was regarded as a place of punishment for the damned. Hence the Danes say, "Get you to Heckenfeld!" the N. Germans, "to Hackelberg!" the Scots, "to John Hacklebirnie's house!"

68. Mark (Ang.-Sax. *mearc*, Eng. *mark*) = an outline or border, and *mörk*, akin to *mark* = forest, properly marchland or borderland, which in those days usually consisted of dense forest.

69. Dímon. This is a most inexplicable word. Cleasby thinks it may be de-

rived from *di-mons*, as there exists a double-peaked island of the same name in the *Breiðfjörðr*, but the *Stóra* or Great *Dímon* is a single peak, and seems to throw doubt on this conjecture. Can it be connected with our *demon*, a word whose original sense is equally obscure, though possibly related to Arabic or Persian roots denoting blackness or evil? Or is it possibly akin to the root of *din* or thunder (Icelandic *að dynja*, to pour down with noise like hail).

70. *Naut* (Ang.-Sax. *neht*, Scot. *nout*, Eng. *neat*) = cattle.

71. *Galti* or *göltr* = boar or hog. *Lækr* = brook or rivulet.

72. *Ytri* (comp. of *út*) = outer. *Rangr*, adj. (old form *vrangr*) = wrong, i. e. awry, not straight, as opposed to *riettur*, right.

73. *Næfr* = the bark of the birch used for roofing purposes. *Holt* (Ang.-Sax. *holt*) in the N. and E. of England meant a copse or woodland, but that meaning is now obsolete in both countries, and in Iceland it now means any rough stony hill or ridge, as opposed to a marsh or lea.

74. *Hamrar*. *Hamarr* (Ang.-Sax. *hamor*, Eng. *hammer*), in the old mythology = a thunderbolt. Commonly a hammer, and hence, metaphorically, a hammer-shaped crag.

75. *Hæll* = heel, is a pure Scandinavian word. It also means a peg put into the ground for mooring a boat to, and (from another word) a widow whose husband was slain in battle.

76. *Sól* is the proper Icelandic word for Sun, the other name *Sunna* is not Scandinavian, though sometimes used. Both words are fem.

77. *Kópr* = a young seal, perhaps from its round head; *koppur* = cup, but is now only applied to a certain article of bedroom furniture.

78. *Brattr* (Ang.-Sax. *brant*, *bront*, N.-Eng. *brant*, *brent*) = steep.

79. *Gljúfr*, almost only in the plu., (Ang.-Sax. *glöf*) = a cliff or chasm, especially in the bed of a river. The word *Pjaja* I got from my guide, and is evidently an error for *þjazi*, a giant, the father of *Skaði* (vide Edda).

80. *Geysir*. "The word is sometimes wrongly used as an appellative for a hot spring, the only synonyms for which are *laug* and *hver*. The present *Geysir* is not mentioned by old writers and was probably created in 1294, when some old hot springs disappeared. The word must be old, as the inflexive *ir* hardly exists but in obsolete words, and the name was probably borrowed from some older spring. That springs changed their positions is shown in a pretty legend, referring to their moving when defiled with innocent blood, in 'Isl. þjóða. ii. 112, 113.' Thus Cleasby. Burton has much to say on the subject (q. v. "Ultima Thule." —Nimmo).

81. *Skyr* is a national dish of the Northmen and Icelanders of the present day, as it was of the Teutons in more ancient times, for it was doubtless the *lac concretum* of Tacit. Germ. ch. 23. Cp. Virg. G. 3. 463. (Cleasby.)

82. *Laug* from *að lauga* (Lat. *lavare*) = to bathe. The hot springs were made public bathing-places, and all names in *laug* indicate places where the people bathed in olden times. *Laugardagr* (Saturday) = bath day, *laug-móðr* = wearied from bathing. While in the East cleanliness forms an integral part of godliness, here it appears that the latter has altogether supplanted the former, and we find dirty Christians where formerly were cleanly heathens.

83. *Lyng* (Ang.-Sax. and Eng. *ling*) = heather; it is smaller than *hrís*, coppice.

84. *Þingvellir*. *Þing* (Ang.-Sax. *þing*, Eng. *thing*), from *að þinga*, to hold a meeting, to consult, = a meeting, an interview (of lovers and others), hence a par-

liament. *Völfr* (sing.), perhaps akin to the Germ. *Wald*, means a field. The *Alþing* or general meeting was held on the Thingfield, but smaller assemblies were common all over the country, as many local names testify. It is interesting to compare the Manx *Tynwald*, and Shetland *Tingwall* with this word.

85. Reykjavík should be more properly spelt *Reykjarvök* (gen. sing.) as there is but *one* spring, from which it is named.

86. *Álfr* (Ang.-Sax. *ælf*) = an elf. The elves were a mythical folk as to whose origin two accounts are given. According to one story they are the descendants of those children whom Eve had not finished washing when God Almighty came to visit her, and whom she hid from His sight. Displeased at her behaviour, He said, "God will hide from man, what man hides from God," upon which the unwashed ones vanished, to dwell in rocks and mounds, and hence their name *Huldufolk* = hidden folk. The Edda gives their abode as *Álfheimr* (Elf-home) and their king = *Frey*, the god of light. Many Elf stories are given in Jón Arnason's "Icelandic legends" (Bentley 1864).

87. *Rosmáhl*, or *rosmaill*, also *rostungr* (Ang.-Sax. *horshoel*, Eng. *wal-rus*) = a walrus. The meaning of the prefix *rosm* is unknown. Cleasby considers the English and Anglo-Saxon equivalents to be simply corruptious of the Icelandic. Cp. the Latin *rosmarus* and a second English name, *morse*, Russian, *morf*).

88. Vellunishver: *Vella* (Ang.-Sax., *weallan*) = to well or boil over. *Hverr* = a cauldron or boiler, whence *hver-gætir* signifies a cauldron watcher or cook. Metaphorically the word has been applied to the hot springs of Iceland, and remains in that use to the present day, giving rise to several compounds.

89. Edda = a great-grandmother, but this sense is now obsolete. The elder (Snorri's) Edda, is an *ars poetica*, the newer, prose (or *Sæmundar*) Edda, is a collection of old mythological poems. The former is *the* Edda, *par excellence*.

90. *Síra* is a Romance word, borrowed from the French in the 13th century, and signifying Sir. It has always been used as a priestly title coupled with the Christian name, and so continues to the present day. The same custom, common in Shakespeare's day, has died out of this country.

91. *Melar*, sing. *melr*, = a kind of wild oats growing in sandy soil, whence the word came to be applied to the sand heaps on which the plant grew, and finally any sand heap, whether bare or overgrown, became included in the name. It occurs in many compounds, e. g. *melrakki* = sand-dog, a name of the Arctic fox.

92. *Kaupstaðr* = cheapstead or market. *Að kaupa* (Ang.-Sax., *cēppian*; Ulphilas, *kaupþjan* and *kaupon*; Old Eng., *chop*; North Eng., *coup*), to cheapen, chaffer, couper, is a word common to all Teutonic languages. Grimm's opinion, favoured by Cleasby and Vigfusson, that the word is rather of Gothic origin (*kaupþjan*, to strike in the face) than of Latin (*caupo*, a tradesman; *caupona*, a female shopkeeper, a retail shop; *cauponor*, to trade), seems to be borne out both by the conjugation of the Icelandic verb, and the simile of *striking* which survives in our own expression "to strike a bargain," and Dutch, *koopslagen*, the conclusion of a bargain having been originally symbolized by striking. Prefixes such as *Chip*, *Cheap*, *Chipping*-, *Chapmans*-. (Ang.-Sax. *cēap*) in local names indicate old market places, e. g. *Chapmanslade*, *Cheapside*, *Chipstead*, *Chipping Campden*, and many others. Also our adjective "cheap," (Icel. *o-dýrr* = un-dear) is properly a noun, and should be used with a qualifying adjective, as it signifies a purchase; thus a bargain would be a "good cheap" (Icel. *gott kaup*). The adjective "good" falls away and the noun alone remains, to be finally used as an adjective itself.

93. *Lækjamót*. *Mót* (Ang.-Sax., *gemot*; Old Eng., *mote*, *moot*) = a meeting. As an old Norse law term, *mót* was a *town* meeting as opposed to *þing*, a *country* meeting, cp. the Moothall at Newcastle. *Ár-mót* = waters-mote and occurs as a local name; thus also Lat. *Confluentia*, *Coblentz*, &c. As an adverb it signifies opposition. *Mót*, a stamp or mark appears to be of different origin, cp. *Ulfilas*, *mōta*; Old High Germ. *mūta*.

94. *Hóp* (Ang.-Sax. *hop*, Scot. *hope*) = a small land-locked bay or inlet, connected with the sea, so as to be fresh at ebb tide and salt at flood. It is common in British local names, though not always with the distinct peculiarity of the Icelandic word, e. g., Longhope, Easthope, &c.

95. *Virki* = a work, especially a stronghold or castle, hence our *wark* in compounds, as *bulwark*, *Southwark*, &c.

96. *Stóll* = a stool or chair, and is common to all the Teutonic languages. *Stól-konungr* (stool-king) was the name by which the old Northmen styled the Greek Emperor.

97. *Stóð* (Ang. Sax. *stōd*, Germ. *stut*) = a stud (of horses). Its compounds are *stóð-hestur* (stallion)—*hross* (stud-horse) and—*merr* (brood-mare). The two latter are represented by the Ang.-Sax. *stōd-hors* and *stōd-myre*. Studs were common in the Saga days of Iceland, but the animals were reared for fighting rather than racing.

98. *Ganga* = a gang or going, a course, procession, march, grazing, pasture, &c. In compounds, *þjall-* (fetching home the sheep from the mountain pastures, especially in autumn), *hólm-* (holm-gang, a duel, such being generally fought on a *hólmr* or islet, probably for two reasons, first, that it enabled a large number of spectators to witness the combat without interfering with the combatants, and second that a sandy islet is about the only place in volcanic Iceland where it would be possible to find half a dozen square yards of even surface.) The holm-gang was an institution among the Icelanders till about A.D. 1006, when it was abolished by law. It was accompanied by rites and governed by rules, and a holm was necessarily adjacent to every thingstead.

*Gangr* (Ang. Sax. *gong*, Scot. *gang*) = a walk, journey, pace, &c., also collectively with compounds = a gang (of thieves, &c.).

99. *Málmr* or *málmr* (Ulfilas, *malma*; Ang.-Sax. *mealme*, *mealme-stán* = sand-stone) = (originally) sand, as in the Goth. and Ang.-Sax., but only retaining that sense in local names. The second meaning is metal, treasure, &c., thus, *málm-logi* = a magical flame over hidden treasures.

100. *Sjár* (gen. *Sjáfur*), *sjór* and *sær* (Ulfilas, *saius*, Ang.-Sax. *sæ*), = the sea, and is never used like the German *See* for an inland lake.

101. *Glaumr* = a merry noise, especially at a banquet. In modern usage—*heimsins* = the noise and bustle of the world.

102. *Víkingr* = a freebooter, rover, or pirate. In the Icelandic "*Sögur*" it is used specially of the bands of Scandinavian warriors who during the ninth and tenth centuries harried the British Isles and Normandy, but in after-times the word fell into discredit, and is used, in ecclesiastical legends principally, as equivalent to a robber, being by a misnomer applied even to highwaymen. The word is peculiarly Norse, for though it occurs several times in the Anglo-Saxon poem "*Byrnoth*," it must there be regarded as a Norse word. Probably the same may be said of its occurrence in the passage "*rondas bærun sæwicingas*, over saltne mere," in the poem "*Exodus*;" as well as the name *Lið-vicingas*, applied

in the old Anglo-Saxon poem "Widsith," to thmen fr om Lið in the county of Vik in Norway.

The word may doubtless be derived from *vík*, a small creek, inlet, or bay, whence comes the termination *-wick* or *-wich*, so common in the names of places on the sea coasts of the British Isles that were visited by the Norse emigrants. (Where the suffix occurs in inland local names it has been derived from the Latin *vicus* = village).

We see by the old Icelandic "*Sögur*" (Saws or Sayings), that in the heathen days it was the custom for the youth of distinction to make a warlike expedition to foreign parts, before settling down in life. This voyage was called a *víking* or wicking, and formed as essential a part of a man's education in those days as the grand tour in more modern times. The custom was common among Teutonic tribes and is mentioned in Caesar's "*De bello Gallico*," but there refers to a land foray. Perhaps the American filibusterings of our own day may indicate a revival of an old habit in a new land. The custom did not survive in Iceland long after the opening of the twelfth century, but was carried on by the Norsemen in the Orkneys till the thirteenth century, if not even later. *Víkingr* would thus mean a man from the wicks or haunting the wicks (a wicking-er in fact), and this coincides curiously with the old Irish names *Lochlan* (Norway), and *Lochlannoch* (the Norsemen).

103. *Bóndi* (Ang.-Sax. *þuan*), I have translated throughout by "bonder." Originally it meant a tiller of the land, always involving the sense of ownership, and may be represented by the "yeoman" of England generally, or the "statesman" of Westmoreland and Cumberland. Hence it came to mean the master of the house (Ang.-Sax. *bond*, *húsbond*, Eng. *husband*). In continental Europe, especially Norway and Denmark, *bóndi* became a word of contempt, denoting the common people, just as the English *boor* degenerated from Ang.-Sax. *gebur*. In the Icelandic Commonwealth the word had a good sense, and was often used of the foremost men, and the notion of a "franklin" still remains in the mind of Icelanders.

104. *Bragð*—plu. *brögð*—(Ang.-Sax. *brægð*, *bræd*). Shakespeare has a line—"Since Frenchmen are so *braid*, marry that will, I live and die a maid!"—and the word, according to Stevens, denotes crafty, though Horne Tooke has a notion that it means *brayed*, as a fool in a mortar, and Richardson thinks it bears the sense of violent.

105. *Vopn*, *vöpu* or *vápn* (Ulfilas, *vöþna*, Ang.-Sax. *wapen*, Scot. *wappen* [in wappenshaw]) = a weapon. It occurs in endless compounds, of which the most interesting are *vöðvæping* and *vöðnatak*. The former corresponds with the Scottish *wappenshaw*, a "weapon show," when all franklins had to appear and produce for inspection the arms which each was lawfully bound to carry. The latter (Ang.-Sax. *wapen-getar*) is the English "wapentake," or weapon-grasping, a phrase of more than one signification. In their assemblies the ancients used to express their consent by waving or brandishing their weapons, hence it means metaphorically a vote or decree. In the Icelandic Alþing or Parliament, it assumed a peculiar sense, meaning the breaking up of the session, when men resumed their weapons that had been laid aside during the sitting. Finally, in that part of England which formed the ancient Denelagu, *wapentak* or *wapentagia* came to mean a subdivision, answering to the "hundred" of the Saxon shires.

106. *Helvíti*. *Hell* (Ulfilas, *halja*, Ang.-Sax. *hell*) = Hell, the abode of the

damned, and in a heathen sense answering to the Greek Hades, and to be distinguished from Valhalla. It also means "death." Further, it is the name of an ogress, the Proserpine of Scandinavian mythology, who was represented as of black, livid hue, whence has come the saying, *blár sem Hel* (blue as Hel). The inmates of Hell, ghosts called up from below, were supposed to be endowed with supernatural strength, whence such phrases as *héljar-karl* (Hell-carle) applied to very powerful men. *Víti* (Ang.-Sax. *wite*, Old Eng. *wite*) = a fine, scone. *Helvíti* (lit. Hell-wite) has been used by Christian writers to signify Hell.

107. *Hrein-dýr*. *Hreinn* (Ulfilas, *krains*, Ang.-Sax. *hrân*, lost in English except in the verb to rinse) = clean. *Þýr* (Ulfilas, *djâs*, Ang.-Sax. *deôr*, Eng. *deer*) = an animal, a wildbeast, a deer.

108. *Kjöt* is a Scandinavian word found neither in Saxon nor German. The Scotch *ket* = carrion, seems to be allied.

109. *Hreppstjóri*: *hreppr* = a rape. After the introduction of Christianity, and probably gradually during the eleventh century, the whole of Iceland was divided into rapes for the maintenance of the poor. The business of the *Hreppstjóri* or Rapesteerer, the best bonder in the Rape, now chosen by the Sheriff, but formerly by the parishioners, is to attend to the affairs of the Rape, and especially the welfare of the paupers, to fix the poor-rate of each franklin, and, poor-houses being unknown, to distribute the paupers among the parishioners.

110. Berserkr, not *ber* (Ang.-Sax. *bær*, Eng. *bare*), but *ber*, *bersi*, *björn* (Gothic, *biari*, Ang.-Sax. *bera*) = a bear, and *serkr* (Saxon, *syrc*, Old Eng. and Scot. *sark*) = a shirt.

111. *Hirðir* (Ulfilas, *hairdeis*, Ang.-Sax. *hyrde*) = herd (shepherd, &c.). *Mál* (Ulfilas, *mâl*, Ang.-Sax. *mâl*) = a "meal" or measure.

112. *Hávamál*. The *mál* in this compound is different from the word next above (111), and is related to (Ulfilas, *mahl*, Heliand, *mahal*) = speech. From the old Teutonic *mahl* or *mahal* was formed the middle Latin *mallum*, and this again was in Norman-French rendered *parliament*.

113. *Kross* = Cross, from the Latin, *crux*. The word was introduced with the Roman Catholic faith, and its occurrence in local names indicates spots where road crosses were erected during the time that faith held its ground in the island; cross-worship taking the place of the howe-worship of heathen times. The earliest form of the word approached more closely the Latin and remains in a local name *Krisuvík* or *Krysuvík*. Such names as Holy Rood refer to a similar erection of crosses in Britain.

114. *Pollr* (Gaelic, *poll*, Welsh, *pool*) = a pool. It occurs in several local names, as also in England, e.g. Liverpool and many others.

115. *Faldr* (Ang.-Sax. *feald*,) = a fold, of a garment, but its only use is that explained in the text.

116. *Kinn* (Ulfilas, *kinnus*, Ang.-Sax. *cin*, Eng. *chin*) = a cheek.

117. *Hús* (Ulfilas uses *gards*, *raen* and *hrót*, and confines *hús* to the compound God's-house, but in all other Teutonic languages *hús* is the general word) = a house.

118. *Höll* or *hall* (Ang.-Sax. *heal*, Heliand, *halla*,) = hall.

119. *Eldr* (a true Scandinavian word, for all Teutonic nations use *feuer*, which is wanting in Scandinavian, though used by old Icelandic poets who probably borrowed it from Anglo-Saxon. On the other hand Ulfilas renders *πῦρ* by *son*, Icelandic *funi* (a flame); in Ang.-Sax. poetry and in Heliand *âled* = an incen-

diary and *álan* = to burn up (Lat. *urere*). Rask suggests a Finnish origin for the word) = fire.

120. Klefi (Ang.-Sax. *cleofa*) = a closet.

121. Skot (Ang.-Sax. *scot*, Eng. *scot* and *shot*) = properly a shot or shooting. Metaphorically (as in the phrases *scot and lot*, *scot-free*, &c.) = a contribution. It also bears the sense given in the text.

122. Pekkr (Ang.-Sax. *benc*, Eng. *bench*, *bank*) = a bench.

123. Pallr (probably from Latin, *palus*, *pala* = *stipes*; Eng. *pale*, *palings*). In Icelandic it is used of high steps and especially of a dais or benches in the hall. Its etymology, as also the time when and place whence it was introduced, is uncertain. It may be of Norman origin, though frequently used in the Sagas of the 10th century.

124. Stofa (Ang.-Sax. *stofa* Eng. *stove*) resembles in use the German *Stube*.

125. Hlað (from *hlaða*; Ulfilas, *hlapan*, Ang.-Sax., Old High Germ., and Heliand, *hladan* = to load or lade) = a pile or stack, (North Eng. *lad*), also a barn, but especially used as in the text.

126. Geymsla, from *að geyma* (Ulfilas, *gaumjan*, Ang.-Sax. *gyman*) to keep.

127. Gestr (Ulfilas, *gasts*, Ang.-Sax. *gest*) = a guest. Originally the meaning was a stranger or alien; but whereas the Latin *hostis*, came to mean a *foe*, the Teuton (like the Greek) equivalent became a term of *friendship*. In olden times there were no public hosteleries, and all entertainment was, as it still is in Iceland, private bounty. With the building of churches and giving of endowments in Christian times, the donors often imposed the duty of feeding guest and ganger for a night.

128. Herbergi (Ang.-Sax. *herberga*, *herebeorga*, Old Eng. *herberow*, *harbrough*, *herber*) = harbour or harbour, host-shelter, an inn.

129. Hlutr (Gothic, *hlauts*, Ang.-Sax. *hlōt*, Heliand, *hlōt*, Ormulum, *lott*) = a lot, or share. The drawing of lots was originally a sacred ceremony among the Scandinavians, and resembled that described by Homer. Each party marked his lot and threw it into a sheet, whence a third party drew it—it was not thrown out by shaking. The rite was used in sacrifices, by way of augury; in sharing booty or an inheritance; in law, for deciding the order in which the cases should come on for hearing; and in banquets for assigning the seats of honour. Metaphorically it has come to mean a portion or allotment without the actual drawing of lots, and is used especially of a fisherman's share of the catch.

130. þelamörk. *þeli* = frozen ground. *þela-högg* = an ice-hoe used for grave-digging. *þelamörk* = also the Norse county *Thelemarken*.

131. Hana-ötta. *Hani* (Ulfilas and Ang.-Sax. *hana*; Heliand, *hano*; Eng. *hen*) = a cock. *Ötta* (Ulfilas, *uhtwo* = *ἐννοχον*, *uhtings* = *εὐκαιρος*, *uhteigo* = *εὐκαιρος*, *uhteigs wisan* = *σχολάζειν*; Ang.-Sax., *uhte*; Heliand, *uhta*) is an old Teutonic word signifying the last part of the night just before day-break.

132. Bólstaðarhlíð. *Ból* (Ang.-Sax. *boll* and *boll*; *byld* = *acer*, *mansio*; *bydlian* = *ædificare*; Eng. *to build*) = 'built,' that is reclaimed and cultivated land. *Ból* and *böll* are very frequent in Danish local names and even mark the line of Scandinavian settlements. But in Iceland this sense is almost obsolete, and only remains in a few local names, law passages, and phrases, *ból* and *bali*; otherwise denoting a lair.

133. Gauksmýri. *Gauker* (Ang.-Sax., *geac*, Scot. *gowk*) = a cuckoo, the *Cog* of the ancient British.

134. Línakradalr. *Lín* (Ulfilas, *lein* = *σινδών*; Eng. *linen*) = flax, and linen gear. *Akr* (Ulfilas, *akrs*, Ang.-Sax. *acer*, Eng. *acre*) = arable land, opposed to *engi*, a meadow.

135. Engi (Ang.-Sax. *ing*) = an outlying meadow, where the grass is not cut till August. It is found in many English local names, as Ings, Broad Ing, &c.

136. Hjarðarholt. *Hjörð* (Ulfilas, *hairda*, Ang.-Sax. *heord*) = a herd or flock.

137. Leirárvogar. *Leir* (Scot. *lair*) = clay, earth, loam. Also mud, especially on the shore at low water-mark. *Ler-wick* in Shetland = *leir-vik*, a muddy creek.

138. Berjadalr. *Ber* (Gothic, *bari*, Ang.-Sax. *beria*) = a berry.



## APPENDIX B.

## WHAT THE TOURIST WANTS TO KNOW.

STEAMERS.—Chiefest among the many things that the Icelandic tourist will want to know are the means by which the island may be reached. Two regular mail steamers ply during a portion of the year between Copenhagen, Leith or Granton, the Færoes and Iceland, and one of them makes several subsidiary tours around it. As but little change occurs from year to year in the dates of departure, &c., the following table will be found useful. It is authentic for this year, and may be used as a basis for future years, as the agents would, on application, inform the intending passenger of any slight alteration that may be made.

## (a) FROM COPENHAGEN TO ICELAND.

Name	Departure from Copenhagen	Leith or Granton	Earliest departure from				Ordinary arrival at Reykjavik
			Trangisvaag	Thorshavn	Eskifjörður	Seyðisfjörður	
Phoenix	1 Mar. 9 a.m.	5 Mar.	.. ..	7 Mar.	.. ..	.. ..	15 Mar.
Phoenix	17 April 9 a.m.	21 April	.. ..	23 April	.. ..	.. ..	29 April
Diana	15 May 9 a.m.	19 May	21 May	22 May	23 May	25 May <sup>1</sup>	4 June <sup>2</sup>
Phoenix	27 May 9 a.m.	31 May	.. ..	2 June	.. ..	.. ..	8 June
Phoenix	7 July 9 a.m.	11 July	.. ..	13 July	.. ..	.. ..	18 July
Diana	4 Aug. 9 a.m.	8 Aug.	10 Aug.	11 Aug.	.. ..	13 Aug. <sup>3</sup>	21 Aug. <sup>4</sup>
Phoenix	17 Aug. 9 a.m.	21 Aug.	.. ..	23 Aug.	.. ..	.. ..	28 Aug.
Phoenix	26 Sept. 9 a.m.	30 Sept.	.. ..	2 Oct.	.. ..	.. ..	11 Oct.
Phoenix	8 Nov. 9 a.m.	12 Nov.	.. ..	14 Nov.	.. ..	.. ..	22 Nov.

1. Thence north up the coast to Vopnafjörður, 25th May; Akureyri, 27th; Skagaströnd, 27th; Ísafjörður, 29th; Flateyri, 29th; Þingeyri, 30th; Bíldudalur, 30th; Stykkishólmur, 1st June, and thence to Reykjavík, 4th June.

2. Thence on a local tour from Reykjavík, 15th June, calling at Stykkishólmur, 15th June; Vatneyri, 16th; Bíldudalur, 16th; Þingeyri, 16th; Flateyri, 17th; Ísafjörður, 19th; Skagaströnd, 19th; Sauðárkrúkur, 20th; Akureyri, 22; Húsavík, 22; Vopnafjörður, 23; Seyðisfjörður, 25; Eskifjörður, 25; and thence along the south coast back to Reykjavík, 30th.

3. Thence north to Húsavík, 13th August; Akureyri, 15th; Ísafjörður, 17th; Þingeyri, 17th; Stykkishólmur, 18th; and so to Reykjavík, 21st.

4. Thence on a local tour from Reykjavík on the 28th August, along the south coast to Eskifjörður, 30; Seyðisfjörður, 1st September; Vopnafjörður, 1st; Húsavík, 2nd; Akureyri, 4th; Sauðárkrúkur, 4th; Skagaströnd, 4th; Ísafjörður, 6th; Flateyri, 6th; Þingeyri, 6th; Bíldudalur, 7th; Vatneyri, 7th; Stykkishólmur, 8th; and back to Reykjavík, 13th.

## (b) FROM ICELAND TO COPENHAGEN.

Name	Departure from Reykjavík.	Earliest departure from				Leith or Granton	Ordinary arrival at Copenhagen
		Seyðisfjörð	Esikfjörðr	Thorshavn	Trangisvaag		
Phoenix	23 Mar. 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	26 Mar.	.. ..	29 Mar.	6 April
Phoenix	6 May 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	9 May	.. ..	12 May	19 May
Phoenix	17 June 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	21 June	.. ..	24 June	29 June
Diana	5 July <sup>1</sup>	12 July	12 July	14 July	15 July	17 July	23 July
Phoenix	27 July 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	31 July	.. ..	3 Aug.	8 Aug.
Phoenix	5 Sept. 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	9 Sept.	.. ..	12 Sept.	17 Sept.
Diana	20 Sept. <sup>2</sup>	23 Sept.	.. ..	24 Sept.	25 Sept.	27 Sept.	5 Oct.
Phoenix	18 Oct. 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	21 Oct.	.. ..	24 Oct.	31 Oct.
Phoenix	29 Nov. 3 p.m.	.. ..	.. ..	2 Dec.	.. ..	5 Dec.	13 Dec.

1. Thence north to Stykkishólmur, 5th July; Þingeyri, 6th; Flateyri, 6th; Ísafjörðr, 8th; Akureyri, 10th; Vopnafjörðr, 10th, and so across the ocean.

2. Thence along the south coast to Seyðisfjörðr, and so direct to the Færoes.

We are assured that the dates and time of departure from Copenhagen and Reykjavík will be adhered to. With regard to the intermediate stations, the *earliest* dates of departure are given, but passengers are told that they must be prepared to find that the sailings from these stations may take place *later*, and I may add, under unfavourable conditions of weather, *not at all*. The delays at the intermediate stations will be as short as possible.

The "Phoenix" will call at the Vestmannaeyjar on each voyage, weather permitting, and, after arrival at Reykjavík, will steam round to Hafnarfjörðr. The "Phoenix" calls at Leith, the "Diana" at Granton. The agents for the former are Geo. V. Turnbull and Co., Leith, Postmaster O. Finsen, Reykjavík, and Sysselmand A. Müller, Thorshavn, Færoe; for the latter, Chr. Salvesen and Co., Granton and Leith.

The fares by the steamers are as follow:—

Between Leith and Færoe, 1st class single ticket, 3*l.*, return (same voyage), 5*l.* Between Leith and southern ports of Iceland, 1st class single ticket, 5*l.*, return (same voyage), 9*l.* Children under 2 years, free; between 2 and 12 inclusive, half-fare. Passengers are allowed 100 lbs. luggage free; for each child, 50 lbs.; excess luggage charged 9*d.* per 10 lbs. Separate cabins may be had (if ordered in time) against payment for all the berths therein. Provisions on board during the passage (without wine and beer), 1st cabin, adults 5*s.* 3*d.* per diem, children 3*s.*

Besides these regular (?) mail steamers, there are some remarkably irregular merchant steamers, which make generally several voyages each summer betwixt various ports in Iceland and the British Isles. Passages may occasionally be secured in them, but I cannot cordially recommend them to people of timid disposition, delicate olfactory nerves, or nice appetite. Particulars concerning them may be obtained from R. and D. Slimon of Leith. Less objectionable than the cattle-boats would be the salmon-steamer recently put on by Mr. Bowman, Lister Street, Hull. I notice that Mr. Shepherd advises any ornithologist who may think of visiting Iceland during the birds' breeding season (May), to take advantage of the small merchant ships which set out early from Copenhagen for Akureyri; thus he would land near the Midgewater, their great haunt, without the drawback of crossing the island at the worst season of the year. Let me very strongly dissuade any one from taking such a step, unless he is quite ready to make

the intimate acquaintance of the drift-ice (which is most dangerous at this season), and to lay his bones where the crews of some half-dozen sailing ships annually find a watery grave. Moreover, he might consider himself a lucky man indeed if he reached the coast under any conditions earlier than the end of May.

Summer yachting may be safely undertaken round the island, as at that season there is no night.

MAPS AND CHARTS.—The Ólsen-Gunnlaugsson "*Uppdráttir Íslands*" (map of Iceland) is published in three different sizes. The largest or four-sheet edition has three separate tintings—physico-geographical, administrative, and hydrographical; it gives a section through the *Sprengisandr*, the heights of all the principal mountains, &c., in Danish feet, the latitude, longitude (west from Copenhagen) and altitude of the trigonometrical stations, a scale of Danish miles, French myriameters, geographical miles (*Hnattmílur*), and *Þingmannaleiðir* (Thingmen's stages), or the distance to be covered in a day by Honourable Members going to Thing; it is used as a general measure of distance among the Icelanders, and is set down on the map as about equal to 5 geographical miles.

The following translation of the explanations of the physico-geographical features will be interesting:—*Mýri* = swamp; *sandr* = sand; *hrasn* = lava; *skógr* *éða* *hrtis* = shaw or coppice; *lítil á* *éða* *stórr læk* = little river or large brook; *stór á* = big river; *stöðuvatn* = lake; *ferja* = ferry; *brú* = bridge; *eingi og hagi* = meadow and pasture; *röst* = roost; *sjáfarströnd* = seashore; *gjá* = lava rift; *hver* *éða* *lang* = hot spring; *heiði og lýng* = heath and ling or heather; *sandar og óvæfi* = stony wastes and desert; *fjöll og hæðir* = fells and heights; *jöklar* = ice-capped mountains; *skriðjöklar* = moving glaciers; *rústir* = ruins; *kerling* = a large beacon; *bær* = a farm or single house; *vegur* = a road or way. This issue of the map is in four sheets each 33 in. by 26 in., scale seven miles = 1 in.; and may be bought of Stanford, Charing Cross, for 42s., or mounted (in case) 56s. 6d. I bought the same in Reykjavik at the office of the Ísleuzka Bókmentafélag (Icelandic Literary Society) for 13kr. (15s.) and got it nicely mounted (in strong case) for 8kr. (9s.) additional. The next smaller edition is in one sheet 34 in. by 27 in., scale 15 miles = 1 in., costing in Reykjavik about 7s., at Stanford's (in case) 13s. 6d. The third or smallest size, fit only for illustrating a volume, a single sheet 9½ in. by 7 in., costs about 1s. in Reykjavik. This is the only map of Iceland with any pretensions to accuracy. It will be found sufficiently correct throughout the inhabited coast-belt, but must not be absolutely depended on in the unexplored deserts, lava-beds, and glacial districts.

Of charts there is a goodly number, English, French, and Danish. The English Admiralty Chart, "Iceland island," was based on the Danish survey, 1845, corrected 1872. The French charts are principally the following 25:—

1. Carte réduite des Côtes septentrionales d'Islande, depuis le Cap Nord (*Horn*) jusqu'à l'île de *Málmei*, 1822.

2. Carte réduite des Côtes occidentales d'Islande, depuis *Snæfells-jökull* jusqu'au Cap Nord, 1822.

3. Carte réduite des Côtes occidentales d'Islande, depuis *Fuglasker* jusqu'à *Hvammssfjörður*, 1822.

4. Carte réduite des Côtes septentrionales d'Islande, depuis l'île *Málmei* jusqu'au Cap *Langanes*, 1823.

5. Carte réduite des Côtes meridionales d'Islande, depuis le Cap *Íngólfshöfði* jusqu'au Cap *Reykjanes*, 1832.

6. Carte réduite des Côtes orientales d'Islande, depuis *Vopnaffjörðr* jusqu'au Cap *Íngólfsböti*.

7. Carte réduite d'Islande et des îles *Feroës*, 1836.

8. Plan de la baie de *Reykjavík*, 1842.

9. Plan du mouillage d'*Öundarfjörðr*; Plan du mouillage de *Patreksfjörðr*, 1845, corr. 1862.

10. Plan de l'entrée du *Hvalfjörðr*, 1855.

11. Plan du mouillage d'*Eskifjörðr*. Croquis des mouillages du *Spath* (?) et de *Svartasker*, 1855.

12. Carte de *Dýrafjörðr*, 1856.

13. Plan des mouillages de *Dýrafjörðr*, 1856.

14. Plan du havre de *Grænafjörðr*, 1858.

15. Plan de *Fáskrúðisfjörðr*, 1858.

16. Plan des passes de *Reyðarfjörðr*, 1858.

17. Carte des attéragés de *Reykjavík* (*Faxafjörðr*), 1859.

18. Plan-croquis du havre de *Norðfjörðr*, 1860.

19. Plan du havre de *Kolgrafafjörðr*, 1860.

20. Plan de la partie de la Côte Sud du *Breiðfjörðr*, 1861.

21. Croquis du mouillage de *Haukadalsr* dans *Dýrafjörðr*, 1861.

22. Carte de l'entrée du Golfe de *Berufjörðr* et de la baie de *Hamarfjörðr*. Carte du *Breiðdalsvík*, 1862.

23. Plan du mouillage d'*Akureyri* (*Eyafjörðr*), 1864.

24. Plan de *Skutilsfjörðr* et du port de *Pollen* (? the "Pool" inside the spit on which stands the cheapstead of *Ísafjörðr*.)

25. Croquis du mouillage de *Bildudalsr* dans *Arnarfjörðr*.

The only Danish charts I need mention are :—

1. Kaart over *Pollen* i *Skutilsfjord*, *Isefjords Dybet*, 1865-7.

2. Islands *Vestkyst*, *Stykkishólm* med *Grunder og Kólgrafafjörðr*, 1869.

3. Kaart over *Island*, med omgivende *Dybd*, 1871.

TIME FOR VISIT.—This will partly be governed by the dates on which the steamers sail, but the sojourn must be limited between the end of May and the end of September. Until the first week of June there is no grass fit for the ponies; hay might be got, but cannot be transported, corn cannot be got, and neither would the ponies touch except under the influence of starvation: they will leave dry food and go off in search of the scantiest pasture. I speak of ponies as a rule, and except the choice riding-pony whom a rich bonder may keep on corn, and who will assuredly never come under the saddle of a stranger on a journey. Thus it happens that unless ponies have been secured and put in stable on corn diet from the preceding autumn, they are not capable of performing any travel until June has well commenced. After the end of September, and even sooner in the north, winter may be expected at any moment, and the rheumatically afflicted had better not get in it. Salmon fishing will begin and end with the times I have given. The ornithologist who goes in quest of eggs, &c., will have to arrive in early May, and do as much as he can in boats and on foot, but that will not be very much: if he be very ardent, let him look under the head of *Exploration*.

GUIDES.—One traveller says,—“You must be provided with a compass and Gunnarsson's map, then you can find your way as well without as with a guide.” I only hope that nobody will be foolish enough to make the experiment, at least until he has acquainted himself thoroughly with the country. I should like to

know what compass or map will show you the exact ford on a river or the way out of a bog, or the track through a lava bed, or the watered grass patch in a desert? Unhandy, lazy, and stupid though Icelandic guides be, and they are all three with a very vengeance, they are simply indispensable. Of course if you choose to travel *en grande tenue* and take a valet with you, well and good; but do not imagine that any number of valets, or Færoese, or Swiss guides will avoid the need of native assistance. Guides of various grades can usually be picked up at any cheapstead or trading-station, and are hired at so much per day. The first care of the tourist who does not speak the language will be to secure one—generally a student—who has acquired more or less smattering of English. (Here I may remark that a knowledge of Danish, and still more Norwegian, will be of considerable assistance). He should be secured for the whole tour, and will ask four to six *krónur* (say 4s. 6d. to 6s. 9d.) per diem, according to his conscience. Drivers should be got for three to four *krónur* (3s. 4½d. to 4s. 6d.). At these rates the men have to find themselves in everything<sup>1</sup>; it is sometimes arranged that they shall take less pay in lieu of having meals and lodging found them, but this plan is quite unsuited for foreigners. It is as well for all parties, to conclude a succinct written engagement with your *employés*, detailing their wages and duties, and giving the employer the right to discharge any individual at short notice in case of incapacity, or drunkenness, or other serious fault. This document must be attested by two independent witnesses. Supplementary guides will often have to be engaged from farm to farm. Boys would be lighter for the ponies, but would be of little service with pack-horses. Put yourself under your head guide for the time being, and make him responsible for everything; tell him your plans beforehand, and do not reject advice if it seems to be well founded. Remember it is his duty to go first at fords and dangerous places. Finally: be stern, but keep your temper.

HORSES.—The ponies of Iceland, which are the sole mode of conveyance in the interior, are stout, sturdy little fellows about fourteen hands high, with short necks, big ugly heads and no shoulders. They can endure considerable fatigue, travelling usually six hours a day without food and requiring only an hour's bait to fit them for another six hours. Some amble, some trot, all carry their heads low and when tired stumble frequently, but they seldom fall with ordinary riding. They have "no mouths" at all, and must be left to follow their own inclinations pretty much. In crossing rivers let the bit feel the animal's mouth firmly, so as to help it up in case of a stumble, but never tug at the bridle nor oppose the beast's will in such a case. Be careful to let them stale at sufficiently frequent intervals, and allow them to drink when they wish. Before buying a pony, his legs, hoofs, and back must be examined, the last-named especially. Carelessness in adjusting saddles and pack-saddles constantly produces sores on the spine and ribs, which will always breakout again under the least provocation, and any animal which has thus suffered should never be bought or taken on a long journey, but may be hired on short tours. A scar is generally visible where such sores have been, but the safest plan is to pass the hand firmly along the spine and ribs, feeling carefully for a small lump, which is the dangerous symptom. Sometimes your horses will get galled on a journey; if blisters arise from the saddle bearing on the spine, the animal may still be put under a pack-saddle if it be essential to use him. Reject any beast

<sup>1</sup> Save horses.

having a sore under the root of the tail, which would prevent the use of the ever-necessary crupper.

There has been much discussion among travellers as to the relative advantages of buying and hiring ponies. My advice is:—if you intend making long journeys, e. g. across the island, buy your horses and sell them again when done with. You will get about one-fifth of what you gave for them,—more, probably, if you can part with them to the Scotch pony-dealer. If you purpose travelling little, hire your ponies. Good, fat pack-horses, ready shod, should not exceed 100 to 110 *krónur* (say 5*l.* 10*s.* to 6*l.*); riding-ponies will not be got for less than 200 to 300 *krónur* (11*l.* to 16*l.*), but their pace and merits will not be appreciated by a novice, and he will do better to choose a soft and willing pack-horse (especially those which the guides will single out for their own riding), than to buy a fiery pacer, such as my pet *Surtr*, who will probably bring about a dissolution of partnership in the first burst, unless his rider is accustomed to steeple-chasing. The usual charge for hiring ponies is 2 *krónur* (2*s.* 3*d.*) each per diem and their fodder; the latter in summer should never cost more than 16 *aurar* (about 2*d.*) per head per twenty-four hours, and I have often paid but the half. In hiring horses the owner will often stipulate that one of his own servants shall be engaged to take care of them, to which there can be no objection. Hire will have to be paid for every day which the animals are away from home, whether they be worked or no. It will often be necessary to hire a boy at 1½ to 2 *krónur* (1*s.* 8*d.* to 2*s.* 3*d.*), to watch the horses at night, as they are very apt to stray in spite of hobbles. A good way of preventing the ponies escaping when obliged to leave them for a few minutes in search of game or to ascend an eminence, is to tie them in couples, each one's head to the other's tail, they cannot then wander far. In the ordinary way the pack-horses are driven ahead in a promiscuous troop, but on reaching farms, where the grass is laid up for hay, or in passing bad places or difficult fords, it is the custom to lead them by strong cords fastened to the lower jaw, but see that the cord does not imprison the tongue. When ferrying rivers it may sometimes be needful to tow the animals in twos or threes from the stern, but in general they are driven in pell-mell by shouts, whip-cracking, and volleys of stones, and left to land where they list. Let me here advise the traveller to make it a standing rule when *driving* the horses across at a ferry, to send one or two of the party over in the boat *first*, so that they may receive and collect the ponies as they come to bank. This is especially imperative when it is growing dusk, but the plan is worthy of being followed also in broad daylight.

The number of horses required may easily be reckoned as follows:—one apiece for every individual in the party, guides as well as tourists, and one for 160—200 lbs. of baggage. These will suffice on short excursions: on long tours there must be spare animals in the proportion of at least one to three of those under saddle or pack, and, where great speed is necessary the pack-horse loads should be restricted to 80 lbs. per horse, and each rider should have a remount. Under such circumstances the island might be crossed with ease in five or six days, and one might undertake it in four, if need be.

**HORSE-GEAR.**—*Saddler.* Provide yourself with an English saddle, the lightest you can get, and have it *stuffed* and *re-stuffed* for razor-backs. Take care to have capacious stirrups to admit sea-boots, and beyond all things a good *crupper*—a spare one or two may find a place in the boxes and will never be regretted. In addition have a couple of D's firmly fixed on either side of the crupper to receive little leather straps for holding the waterpots. A black lambskin thrown across

the saddle helps to preserve it, is grateful in cold weather, and helps to prevent "excoriations." Take care that the girths are sound, dispense with martingales and all showy rubbish, always saddle your pony yourself, and do not forget to alight and tighten the girths before taking a long or deep ford.

*Bridles.*—Take a pony bridle with a snaffle bit, light and simple, a curb is worse than useless. The native bridles are heavy, clumsy things, the reins generally fastened with a bit of twine.

*Spurs.*—These will be found more useful than a whip, being more effective and less tiring to both parties interested. A whip is useful for driving the pack-horses, but that is no part of the tourist's duty.

*Shoes.*—All the ponies should be soundly shod before starting, and a few spare shoes and plenty of nails should be laid in. These can always be got at the cheap-stands, but not always at farms by the way. Fasten every shoe with six nails; generally only four are used in the packhorse shoes, but six are far better. The Icelanders are some of the worst farriers in the world, and to be able to shoe one's own horses is of inestimable value to the Icelandic traveller, for the rough ways tear off shoes constantly, and a very short time without them suffices to lame the beast.

*Hobbles.*—"Pony-straying seems in Iceland to be looked upon as a visitation of Providence, which it is impious (as some people think of the small-pox) to guard against by human means," says the *Saturday Review*, and it speaks the painful truth. Hobbles, in my experience, are a delusion and a snare; you will upset your guide for the remainder of the journey if you make him put them on, and he will fasten them either so loosely that they slip off, or so tightly that they break. If you hire a lad to watch your ponies through the night, he will in all probability seize the opportunity for riding the best of them till he feels tired, and will then curl himself up for a comfortable snooze till morning. I see only one cure for the evil, viz. to take English pony-hobbles and put them on with your own hands.

*Pack-saddles.*—These are of two kinds. The best, which are used by the mail carriers, and should be employed on all long journeys, are of sacking stuffed with roots, moss, &c., and joined by iron bands arching over the back. They are especially adapted for carrying boxes, and cost 18 to 20 *krónur* (20s. to 22s. 3d.), or a proportionate rent. The common sort, costing 4 to 6 *krónur* (4s. 6d. to 6s. 9d.), and fit only for short trips or to bear tents and camp-beds, consists of two thick slabs of turf, or rather the matted roots of the buckbean or marsh trefoil, held together by girths from the wooden crutch which rests on them. A peg rising from either side of the crutch carries the load. The former are known locally as *Reiðingar*, the latter as *Klifberar*. It is not always easy to get a sufficient supply. Some enterprising traveller should try to introduce the Otago pack-saddle, which was used in the Abyssinian expedition, and has been praised by all explorers who have used it; but he must be prepared to load and unload it himself, as he will get no native to touch the "new-fangled notion." Never use a pack-saddle of any kind without a strong crupper.

*Etect.ras.*—Fill every corner of your boxes with straps and strong yet supple rope; and you will not regret having a good clasp-knife, a pair of pincers, a hammer, and a double handful of assorted French nails. The last may be got *in loco*.

**BOXES AND LOADS.**—Not a traveller but complains of the state of suspense and apprehension in which he was kept by the accidents that happened to his baggage,

but very much of this is due in every instance to the nature of the *impedimenta*—tent-poles, fishing-rods, and guns—and to carelessness in adjusting the balance of the loads. It matters little in what the luggage is packed for the voyage, it must all be rearranged on landing in the country. It is essential to bear in mind that no load must exceed 160—200 lbs. on any journey, and that on long or rapid tours 80 lbs. may be the maximum; and it is even more important to remember that this load must consist of two distinct and *equally* heavy portions, one to hang on either side of the pony. An old portmanteau, not exceeding 2 ft. long, 15 in. deep, and 10 in. thick, may carry enough for a paltry tour, such as from *Reykjavík* to *Geysir* or *Hekla*, and should be encased in a bag of very stout canvas; a couple not overstepping the weight above mentioned, would form a capital load for one pony. But on a journey of any duration everything possible must be packed into little wooden boxes measuring 22 in. long, 15 in. deep, and 10 in. wide. They may be made at home by any carpenter; the wood (deal) should be  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. thick; the joints ploughed and tongued, and the ends morticed; the lid sloped or arched to let off the rain, and made of a single board with a couple of little flanges at the ends; the whole should be thoroughly well-painted outside, bottom and all; the seams may be pitched inside, or it may be lined with tin; and a couple of strips of wood should be fastened across the bottom to keep the box off the ground when set down. Above all things avoid projections; and screw a stout iron ring (movable) into each end of the box, through which to pass the ropes. A little wooden pocket at one end and near the top, will be a valuable receptacle for horse-shoes and nails, and such small trifles as are likely to be in constant request by the way. Boxes on this pattern may generally be got at the cheapsteads in Iceland for a few shillings, but it is not safe to depend upon the supply. Ever remember that the great secret is to make the boxes in *equally heavy pairs*, and to *crum them so full* that a roll down stairs will not disturb the contents. A ring in the bottom of each box and a second in the lid, for bracing the boxes together above and beneath the pony, are sometimes added as extra safeguards against jolting.

TENTS AND CANTEEN.—There are two occasions when a tent becomes a necessary—for crossing uninhabited districts, and if the party be so large as to despair of finding accommodation in the farms and churches. Of course, a tent is at all times a useful article, but it occasions so many delays and the poles and pegs are such a perpetual source of trouble that I earnestly counsel every one to do without it when he can. The stopping-places selected in the sketch routes I shall give presently are all church-farms, unless expressly stated to the contrary. As a rule the farm-houses can accommodate one or two strangers in the guest-room, besides receiving all the guides into the *baðstofa*, and the churches will take a dozen, or twenty at a pinch. When occupying the latter, it is just as well to inquire whether there are any corpses lying there awaiting burial, and if so, to learn the cause of death, in case of infectious diseases. If a tent must be taken, let it be the smallest that ingenuity can make availing. Mr. Shepherd recommends Edgington's storm-tent; the native tent will serve all purposes when it is to be had (on hire), but that is involved in great uncertainty. It consists of two uprights about 4 ft. high, joined by a crossbar about 6 ft. long, covered with common *vaðmál* or linen and pegged down by stones, turf, or anything that comes in the way. Boxes and imperishable articles may be heaped up to windward.

In 1872 my party had a little bucket canteen, measuring 14 in.  $\times$  9 in., which we found useful on long excursions. The bucket, of painted canvas, had a handle



which enabled it to be used for carrying water, and the cover, which took off, was handy for washing faces, hands, and dishes. It contained a little charcoal stove, gridiron, frying-pan, saucepan, kettle, 2 sandwich-boxes, 3 enamelled iron cups and saucers, 3 knives and forks, 1 large spoon, pepper and salt castors. It was bought of Silver, Cornhill. A pocket spirit-lamp and the necessary supply of spirit would be useful for making grog.

BEDS AND BEDDING.—An Icelandic bed is one of the most attractive couches I know of—barring dirt and fleas; but the floor of a church or a tent is apt to be uncommonly hard and unaccommodating to weary limbs, therefore are mattresses considered necessary. I say of them as of tents, do without them if you can. A cork mattress may be used in a tent for keeping off damp, but it is cumbersome to carry, and very hard to lie on, and an oilskin coat will serve the same purpose. In the cultivated districts cut grass may nearly always be gathered in July and August, and makes an excellent bed. But why have *hammocks* never been tried in Iceland? they are no weight to carry, and may be suspended from the rafters of the churches without the slightest inconvenience. One really good blanket or rug, large enough to envelope the whole body, is all the bed-clothing required; in fact an old ulster-coat will serve every turn.

CLOTHING.—A black suit is quite out of place; take one stout tweed suit with an abundance of pockets in the coat and vest, all furnished with flaps to button down. For the coat I prefer the jacket-shape, which does not incommode one when riding; tails and tail-pockets are not made for work. All under-clothing should be of flannel or worsted; drawers, jerseys, and shirts should be in duplicate, of stockings (knitted woollen,) four pairs are ample. Icelandic woollen stockings and gloves are very cheap and very good. A stout football or fisherman's jersey is very useful to draw on over the waistcoat in bad weather. Head-gear will be best represented by a sou'-wester for rain, and a soft peaked cap or hat for fine, sunny days. Those who are thin-skinned should take a large gauze net, to go quite over the head and button under the coat, or the midges which infest lakes and swampy places will not improve their dispositions. The kind of boots I shall recommend are stout Wellingtons, reaching the knee and admitting the trousers. They should be greased, of course, and will be as useful when riding or walking, as when fishing or shooting; longer boots are not necessary, as there is no wading to be done, and the extra length is only a burden and a discomfort. Last comes the waterproof kit, to be strapped at the back of the saddle ready for use at a moment's notice. The material must be *fishermen's oilskin*,—yellow is the best, black is useless—and is best bought in Leith, where such articles are made for wear and not for show. The coat should be *double* throughout, and reach to the knees; the trousers are to be drawn over the boots and fastened round the waist—a lambskin on the saddle saves wear in the seat. Mackintoshes, fishing-stockings, and Icelandic skin-stockings are alike unsuited to summer travel.

MEATS AND DRINKS.—It is not absolutely necessary to take any sort of provision, as the quantity and quality of the native food is very fair. Mutton and cod are to be had on asking and paying, trout, salmon, duck, ptarmigan, and plover, for the catching. Potatoes will appear occasionally; the *skyr* or curds, butter, cream, and milk, are delicious; coffee and corn-brandy or potato-spirit, are to be found everywhere. A few biscuits may be taken if the palate refuses rye-bread, and remember that chutney, cayenne, mustard, Worcester sauce, and pickles cover a multitude of sins. If any more is insisted upon, let it be sundry tins of potted soups.

TOILETTE AND OTHER VANITIES.—A comb and brush, a cake of soap, and a towel must be accommodated. For weak eyes sand-glasses are useful on account of dust and glare. An excellent eye-wash is composed of sulphate of zinc and rose-water, replacing the zinc by lead every alternative month.

INNS AND GUESTING.—Inns will be found at all the principal cheapsteads on the coast, but in the interior there are none, that is to say, I know of only two farmers who possess liquor licences. The traveller will be glad to know the scale at which private hospitality should be rewarded. The charge for food and lodging at a farm should never exceed 2 *krónur* (2s. 3d.) per head per diem; and in cases where the host will not state his charge, this rate should be adhered to. If the host refuses money and the farm is a poor one, it may appropriately be given to the hostess, or in other cases to the waiting-maid.

COIN.—Paper money, whether English or foreign, is quite useless. English gold will be taken by the merchants and most farmers at a high discount, but English silver is quite valueless. Much trouble would be saved by procuring several pounds'-worth of Danish silver from the Consul in Leith, or the shipping-agents before sailing. The Dano-Icelandic currency is:—100 *aurar* = 1 *króna*; 7 *aurar* are about = 1d., 1 *króna* = 1s. 1½d. roughly, or 18 *krónur* = 1l.

PRESENTS.—Beyond a few pocket-knives, I condemn presents from the bottom of my heart; they are a great trouble to carry about, are sure to be spoiled, one is always in doubt where to bestow them, and it is ten chances to one that they will be useless to or unappreciated by the recipients. Where a very long stay is made at a farm under exceptional circumstances, a present may very properly be given, but in that case at least allow your host or hostess the opportunity of expressing their choice, and the selected article—it may be a gun, a sewing-machine, an illustrated volume, or some pieces of calico—can easily be sent from England by the mail steamer.

SHOOTING.—The only large game are reindeer and seals: a small herd of the former exists still in *Mývatns-Þráfi* in the north-east, and another is said to inhabit the district between *Hafnarfjörður* and *Krisuvík* in the south-west, but the chase is beyond measure uncertain; seals may be found on the rocks around the coast, but are not always common property and are never worth seeking. Foxes would not be met with in summer and their pelts would be worthless at that season. Nothing but birds remain. Sea-fowl innumerable may be found on any part of the coast, ducks and waterfowl in every lake and stream; ptarmigan, whimbrel, plover, and snipe in the moors, and on the heaths. Lead may be got on the spot, powder and cartridge-cases must be taken. A small water-dog would be useful, but great care must be taken of his feet. Fowling cannot be termed sport in Iceland, for the simple reason that the close season is not over till the end of August, when most tourists are looking towards home.

FISHING.—Fly-fishing is the only true sport which Iceland offers, but of that there is more than abundance. Speckled trout (white-fleshed), and red char (sea-trout, or salmon-trout), swarm in every lake, pool, and stream, except those fed directly by glacier-water. Salmon arrive in June and ascend the rivers till they are stopped by falls too high to leap. As may be seen in Chapter II., almost any fly answers the purpose, but preference varies. Black midge; grilse; black-hackle, with silver-wing; Hofland's fancy, red body and partridge wing; common cow-dung; marsh-brown; red fly, with jay's wing; woodcock wing, with red and orange-banded body; and many others have been tried in turn. Some fishers swear by dark colours, others assert that artificial minnows, spoon-bait, and flies

gorgeous with tinsel will tempt the fish when others fail. A lowering sky after bright sunshine is probably the most favourable time for a rise. Wading is never necessary; there are no trees to avoid, and no neighbours' boundaries to respect; no charge is made for the right—but it is only politeness to ask the permission that is sure to be granted; the catch belongs to the host or the owner of the right, but he will most likely accept only the salmon, which he will be happy to sell to you at 3*d.*—4*d.* per lb.

ORNITHOLOGY.—In Baring Gould's volume on Iceland will be found a catalogue of the birds known or supposed to frequent the island. The egg-collector must arrive in early May and put up with many discomforts. The tarns, pools, and marshes of the *Arnarvatnsheiði* (Erne-water-heath), are the breeding-places of the wild swan, scaup duck, long-tailed duck, teal, great-northern diver, red-throated diver, great black-backed gull, purple sand-piper, dunlin and goosander; possibly also, the knot and sanderling. Grey-lag, bean, and pink-footed geese breed near the sources of the *Skjálfsandafjót* and *Jökulsá í Axarfirði* (á *Fjöllum*). The eggs of the following birds have been taken on the islets of *Mývatn* (Midge-water), where, however, wholesale slaughter or robbing will be resented by surly Peter at *Reykjahlíð*.—Scaup and long-tail, red-breasted merganser and golden-eye, black scoter, red-necked phalarope, gadwall, mallard, teal, widgeon (rarest), pintail, Slavonian grebe, tern, red-shanks. The harlequin duck will be found on the *Laxá* close by and on most rapid streams.

EXPLORATION.—The scope for Icelandic exploration, in the serious sense of the word, is growing smaller by degrees, and beautifully less. There still remain however, some snowy uplands and the great *laða* desert. The greatest of the *jökklar*, it is true, has been crossed by Mr. Watts, and he has favoured us with two livrets on the subject, one telling how he didn't do it, the other how he did; but it is quite possible that a second explorer might tell us much more than we yet know about the secrets of the great frozen plateau. I should not presume to lecture on generalities to those who might undertake exploration in Iceland, but there are one or two minor points on which I may be permitted to offer a few remarks. Do not place too much dependence on the map, nor on your compass; and do not expect that Icelandic snow-shoes will assist you in the least. I promised the ardent ornithologist a few words under this subject, and the same will apply to the explorer:—If you intend travelling in May or early June, or if you purpose relying to any great degree upon the endurance of your ponies, you must buy (or commission a trustworthy Icelander to buy) the requisite numbers of mounts of the best quality at the end of the previous summer (say October), you must let them be fed indoors on hay and corn during the winter, and then they will be fit to work hard in the following spring, and will have become accustomed to corn. If you neglect this precaution and trust to buying up, just when you want them, animals which are not half recovered from the semi-starvation that attends wintering out-of-doors, you must be prepared to see them give in when it is most important that they should hold out.

MAIL ROUTES.—It frequently happens that the tourist would very gladly despatch some of his baggage from one place to another without being under the necessity of accompanying it. This can most conveniently be accomplished through the medium of the local postman, who would be glad to take charge of a laden horse or two for a "consideration," and could be trusted with much greater confidence than a stray guide. Even if the number of horses thus sent were so great as to require the services of an extra man to assist the postman, the plan would

still possess advantages. For this reason I append a translation of the official programme of postal routes and stations, which varies very slightly from year to year. Of course the postman would expect to receive the necessary cash for ferry-tolls and fodder before starting, and would not refuse his honorarium if offered it.

Journeys.	Names of Posthouses.	Posts leave :—							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I. Between <i>Reykjavik</i> and <i>Ísafjörðr</i> . A. From <i>Ísafjörðr</i> .	<i>Ísafjörðr</i> . .	Jan 13	Mar. 3	April 21	June 2	a July 11	Aug. 21	b Sept. 30 Oct.	b Nov. 9
	<i>Vatnsfjörðr</i> . .	14	4	22	3	12	22	1	10
	<i>Bar</i> . . . .	15	5	23	4	13	23	2	11
	<i>Márskelda</i> . .	16	6	24	5	14	24	3	12
	<i>Hjarðarholt</i> }	18	8	25	6	15	25	4	13
	( <i>í Dalargjálu</i> ) }								
	<i>Hjarðarholt</i> }	20	10	27	8	17	27	6	15
	( <i>í Mýragjálu</i> ) }								
	<i>Hestr</i> . . . .	20	10	27	8	17	27	6	15
	<i>Saurbær</i> . . .	21	11	28	9	18	28	7	16
	<i>Mosfell</i> . . .	22	12	29	9	18	28	8	17
B. From <i>Reykjavík</i> .	<i>Reykjavík</i> . .	Feb. 4	Mar. 26	May 8	June 19	July 30	Sept. 7	Oct. 20	Dec. 5
	<i>Mosfell</i> . . .	4	26	8	19	30	7	20	5
	<i>Saurbær</i> . . .	5	27	9	20	31	8	21	6
	<i>Hestr</i> . . . .	6	28	9	20	31 Aug.	8	21	7
	<i>Hjarðarholt í M.</i>	7	29	10	21	1	9	22	8
	<i>Hjarðarholt í D.</i>	9	31	12	23	3	11	24	10
	<i>Márskelda</i> . .	10	1	13	24	4	12	25	11
	<i>Bar</i> . . . .	11	2	14	25	5	13	26	12
	<i>Vatnsfjörðr</i> . .	12	3	15	26	6	14	27	13
II. I. Between <i>Reykjavík</i> and <i>Akureyri</i> . A. From <i>Akureyri</i> .	<i>Akureyri</i> . .	Jan. 13	Mar. 3	April 22	June 1	July 10	Aug. 21	b Sept. 30 Oct.	b Nov. 8
	<i>Steinstaðir</i> . .	14	4	23	2	11	22	1	9
	<i>Víðimýri</i> }	15	5	24	3	12	23	2	10
	( <i>Krossanes</i> ) }								
	<i>Bólstaðarhlöð</i> .	16	6	24	3	12	23	3	11
	<i>Reykir</i> . . . .	17	6	25	4	13	24	3	11
	<i>Sveinsstaðir</i> . .	18	7	26	5	14	25	4	12
	<i>Lækjarmót</i> . .	19	7	26	5	14	25	5	12
	<i>Staðarbakki</i> . .	20	8	27	6	15	26	5	13
	<i>Melar</i> . . . .	21	9	28	7	16	27	6	14
	<i>Hjarðarholt í M.</i>	23	11	30	9	17	29	8	16
	<i>Hestr</i> . . . .	23	11	30	9	17	29	8	16
	<i>Saurbær</i> . . .	24	12	1	10	18	30	9	17
	<i>Mosfell</i> . . .	25	13	1	10	18	30	9	18

Journeys.	Names of Posthouses.	Posts leave:—							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
B. From <i>Reykjavík.</i>	<i>Reykjavík</i> . .	Feb. 3	<i>c</i> 24	<i>c</i> 7	<i>c</i> 18	<i>c</i> 28	<i>c</i> 6	<i>c</i> 19	<i>b</i> 4
	<i>Mosfell</i> . . .	3	24	7	18	28	6	19	4
	<i>Saurbær</i> . . .	4	25	8	19	29	7	20	5
	<i>Hestr</i> . . . .	5	26	8	19	29	7	20	6
	<i>Hjarðarholt i M.</i>	6	27	9	20	30	8	21	7
	<i>Melar</i> . . . .	8	29	11	21	31	10	23	9
	<i>Staðarbakki</i> . .	9	30	12	22	Aug. 1	11	24	10
	<i>Lækjarnét</i> . .	10	30	12	22	1	11	24	10
	<i>Sveinstaðir</i> . .	11	31	13	23	2	12	25	11
	<i>Reykir</i> . . . .	12	31	13	23	2	12	25	11
	<i>Bólstaðarhlöð</i> .	13	April 1	14	24	3	13	26	12
	<i>Víðingri</i> . . . }	14	2	15	25	4	14	27	13
	( <i>Krossanes</i> ) . . }								
	<i>Steinstaðir</i> . .	15	3	16	26	5	15	28	14
II. 2. Between <i>Akureyri</i> , and <i>Scyðisfjörðr.</i> A. From <i>Scyðisfjörðr.</i>	<i>Scyðisfjörðr.</i> . .	Jan. 25	<i>d</i> 20	<i>e</i> 15	<i>c</i> 16	<i>c</i> 25	<i>f</i> 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 28
	<i>Eyðar</i> . . . .	26	21	16	17	26	31	16	29
	<i>Grlmstaðir</i> . .	29	24	19	19	28	2	19	2
	<i>Reykjahllöð</i> . .	30	25	20	20	29	3	20	3
	<i>Múli</i> . . . .	31	26	21	21	30	4	21	4
	<i>Ljósavatn</i> . .	Feb. 1	27	22	22	31	5	22	5
	<i>Akureyri</i> . .	25	12	29	5	10	25	10	22
	<i>Ljósavatn</i> . .	26	13	30	6	11	26	11	23
B. From <i>Akureyri.</i>	<i>Múli</i> . . . .	27	14	31	7	12	27	12	25
	<i>Reykjahllöð</i> . .	28	15	June 1	8	13	28	13	26
	<i>Grlmstaðir</i> . .	Mar. 1	16	2	9	14	29	14	27
	<i>Eyðar</i> . . . .	4	19	5	11	16	2	17	30
	<i>Reykjavík</i> . .	Feb. 2	27	Mar. 9	20	July 31	Aug. 8	Oct. 22	Dec. 6
III. 1. Between <i>Reykjavík</i> and <i>Freitsbakki.</i> A. From <i>Reykjavík.</i>	<i>Reykjavík</i> . .	Feb. 2	27	Mar. 9	20	July 31	Aug. 8	Oct. 22	Dec. 6
	<i>Hraungerði</i> . .	3	28	10	21	1	9	23	7
	<i>Breiðabólstaðir</i>	4	29	11	22	2	10	24	8
	<i>Skógar</i> . . . .	5	30	12	23	3	11	25	9
	<i>Vík</i> . . . .	6	31	13	24	4	12	26	10
	<i>Mýrar</i> . . . .	7	April 1	14	25	5	13	27	11

Journeys.	Names of Posthouses.	Posts leave :—							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
B. From <i>Prestsbakki</i> .	<i>Prestsbakki</i> . . .	<i>a</i> Feb. 21	<i>b</i> April 11			<i>b</i> July 4	<i>b</i> Aug. 14	<i>b</i> Sept. 23	<i>b</i> Nov. 9
	<i>Mýrar</i> . . .	22	12	May 24	5	15	24	10	18
	<i>Vík</i> . . .	23	13	25	6	16	25	11	19
	<i>Skógar</i> . . .	24	14	26	7	17	26	12	20
	<i>Breiðabólstaðir</i>	25	15	27	8	18	27	13	21
	<i>Hraungerði</i> . .	26	16	28	9	19	28	14	22
									23
III. 2. Between <i>Prestsbakki</i> and <i>Seyðisfjörðr</i> . A. From <i>Prestsbakki</i> .	<i>Prestsbakki</i> . .	<i>g</i> Feb. 22	<i>g</i> April 10	<i>k</i> May 24	<i>h</i> July 3	<i>l</i> Aug. 8	<i>g</i> Sept. 22	<i>e</i> Nov. 6	<i>k</i> Dec. 19
	<i>Sandfell</i> . . .	24	12	26	5	10	24	8	21
	<i>Kálafellsstaðir</i> .	26	14	28	7	12	26	10	23
	<i>Bjarnanes</i> . . .	27	15	29	8	13	27	11	24
	<i>Hof í Alptafirði</i>	28	16	30	9	14	28	12	26
	<i>Djúpivögr</i> . .	Mar. 1	17	31	10	15	29	13	27
	<i>Höskuldastaðir</i> .		2	June 1	11	16	30	14	28
B. From <i>Seyðisfjörðr</i> .	<i>Seyðisfjörðr</i> . .	<i>a</i> Mar. 16	<i>a</i> May 5	<i>j</i> June 17	<i>m</i> July 24	<i>a</i> Aug. 26	<i>a</i> Oct. 12	<i>a</i> Nov. 25	<i>f</i> Jan. 14
	<i>Höskuldastaðir</i> .	18	7	19	26	28	14	27	16
	<i>Djúpivögr</i> . . .	19	8	20	27	29	15	28	17
	<i>Hof í Alptafirði</i>	20	9	21	28	30	16	29	18
	<i>Bjarnanes</i> . . .	21	10	22	29	31	17	30	19
	<i>Kálafellsstaðir</i> .	22	11	23	30	Sept. 1	18	Dec. 1	20
	<i>Sandfell</i> . . .	24	13	25	Aug. 1	3	20	3	22

## ALTERATIONS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR :—

*a*. Three days later.*b*. One day earlier.*c*. One day later.*d*. Nine days earlier.*e*. Seven days earlier.*f*. Five days later.*g*. Two days earlier.*h*. Six days later.*j*. Two days later.*k*. Three days earlier.*l*. Four days later.*m*. Nine days later.

The departures from the head post stations—*Reykjavík*, *Ísafjörðr*, *Akureyri*, *Seyðisfjörðr* and *Prestsbakki*—take place early in the morning; the dates given for the intermediate stations are the earliest on which the post may leave.

Subsidiary posts (enumerated below) leave the junctions on the day after the arrival of the chief post there, and return thence from their destinations in time to catch the chief post on his return journey; these supplementary posts are :—

1. The *Gullbringusjá* post; leaves *Reykjavík* the day after the arrival of the post ship, passes *Hafnarfjörðr* and *Kálfatjörn* to *KEFLAVÍK*, halts there a day and a night and returns to *Reykjavík*.

2. The *Barðastrandarsýsla* post leaves *Bar* in the *Reykhlólasveit* the morning after the *Reykjavík* post arrives, proceeds to *Brjánslaek* and *Bildudalur* and returns in time to catch the *Ísafjörðr* post on its return.

3. The *Strandasýsla* post starts the day after the arrival of the *Reykjavík* post at *Melar*, passing *Borðeyri* and *Prestsbakki* to *STAÐR* in *Steingrímsfjörðr*, and returns thence in time to catch the northern post at *Melar* on its return journey.

4. The *Snæfellsnessýsla* post leaves *Hjarðarholt* in *Hvammfjörðr*, the day after the arrival of the *Reykjavík* post, for *Breiðabólstaðir* in *Skógarströnd* and *STYKKISHÓLMR*, then goes to *Búðir*, *Rauðkollstaðir* and *Staðarhraun* and returns from *Stykkishólmr* to *Hjarðarholt* the evening before the western post leaves on its return journey.

5. The *Ísafjarðarsýsla* post leaves *Ísafjörðr* for *Holt* in *Örundarfjörðr* and *ÞINGEYRI*, in *Dýrafjörðr* the day after the arrival of the southern post at *Ísafjörðr*, and returns so that it may at latest arrive at *Ísafjörðr* the evening before the western post departs on its return journey.

6. The *Skagaströnd* post leaves *Sveinsstaðir* the day after the arrival of the *Reykjavík* post, and returns after waiting a day and night at *HÓLANES*.

7. The *Höfðaströnd* post leaves *Víðimýri* (*Krossanes*) the day after the arrival of the southern post, and returns after staying a day and night at *HOFÓS*.

8. The *Siglufjörðr* post leaves *Akureyri* the day after the arrival of the southern post, and returns after resting a day and night at *SIGLUFJÖRÐR*.

9. The *Þingeyjarsýsla* post leaves the day after the arrival of the *Akureyri* post at *Holgaustaðir* (*Múli*), for *Fúsavík*, *Skinnaustaðir*, *Efrihólar* (? *Presthólar*) and *SAUÐANES*, and returns after stopping there three days and nights.

10. The *Vopnafjörðr* post leaves the day after the arrival of the *Akureyri* post at *Grimstaðir* for *Hof* and *VOPNAFJÖRÐR*, and returns to *Grimstaðir* after three days' sojourn there.

11. The *Eskifjörðr* post leaves *Seyðisfjörðr* the day after the arrival of both the *Akureyri* and *Prestsbakki* posts, and returns after three days' stay at *ESKIFJÖRÐR*, but must reach *Seyðisfjörðr* before the *Prestsbakki* post has left it again.

12. The *Vestmannaeyjar* post leaves *Breiðabólstaðir* for *KROSS* the day after the arrival of the post from *Reykjavík*, and returns as soon as possible. When the bag returns from the *Vestmannaeyjar* to *Kross* it must be sent on to *Breiðabólstaðir* soon enough to catch the post from *Prestsbakki* to *Reykjavík*.

SKETCH ROUTES.—In the following nine routes which I have sketched out for tourists it has been my endeavour to embody such information as will enable them to make their plans roughly before setting out. The distances are calculated by days and hours, as the number of *miles* would form no criterion whatever. By "one day" is generally meant from ten a.m. till six—eight p.m.; where the day exceeds ten hours the exact number of hours is given, in most instances at least. The farms chosen for resting-places on the beaten paths are those which are likely to give the best accommodation, and they are provided with churches wherein travellers may sleep, unless the contrary be expressly stated. Big rivers are mentioned as they always create more or less delay. In the left column will be found the names of stopping-places and details of their accommodation and length and character of the stages; in the right column are jotted down the salient points of interest, natural and historical curiosities, and notes on sport.

Route I. *Reykjavík* to *Þingvellir*, *Geysir*, *Gullfoss*, *Hekla*, *Njál's* country, *Eyjarbakki*, and *Krísuvík*. Twelve days.

*Reykjavík* (Reekwick).  
Accommodation excellent.

One day, good road,  
easy ford over *Laxá* (Lax-  
water) to

*Þingvellir* (Thingfields).  
Accom. good.

One day, good road,  
easy ford over *Brúlará*  
(Bridgewater), to

*Haukadalr* (Hawkdale).  
Accom. good.

Four hours, no road,  
wet swamp, to

*Gullfoss* (Gold-force).  
No farm.

Six to eight hours,  
fair road, ferry *Hvítá*  
(Whitewater) from *Bræð-  
ratunga* (Brothers' ton-  
gue) or ford it, and ford  
*Minni Laxá* (Minor Lax-  
water), to

*Hruni* (Ruffs).  
Accom. exc.

Fair road, ford Lax-  
water, and ferry or ford  
*Þjórsá* (Bull water), to

*Stóruvellir* (Stour  
fields).

Accom. exc.

One day, bad road,  
fording *Eystri Rangá*  
(Eastern Wrongwater) to  
*Bræðabólstaðr* (Broad-  
built stead).

Accom. good.

Two days, bad road,  
and constant fording of  
deep rivers, to

Museum and Library in the church. Salmon fishing  
in the *Laxá* near, and trout, char, and wildfowl in and  
about the *Ellisavatn*. Eider duck islands in the bay.

Char and trout fishing in the lake. See the *Almanna-  
gjá* (All men's rift); *Lögberg* (Law rock); the pool  
where criminals were drowned, and the island (now sub-  
merged) where duels were fought in the *Öxará* (Axe water);  
the "measure-stone," &c.

See *Geysir* (Gusher), *Strokkur* (Churn), and other hot  
springs. Former very uncertain in erupting, and you  
must camp on the spot to ensure witnessing it; may wait a  
fortnight or only an hour. Borrow spade at Hawkdale  
(cost 2s. 3d.) and feed the Churn with turf sods—it will  
go off at any time under this treatment. Do not use  
stones.

See the fall and notice the mountain scenery above it.  
Ride along by the river to see the *cañons* and rock but-  
tresses on its course.

Fishermen should make a sojourn here, as salmon are  
fine and abundant in three rivers, the White water, Lax-  
water, and Minor Laxwater. The enterprising traveller  
should take a boat from *Þjórsárholt* (Bull water holt) and  
examine the site of the *Árnesþing* (Waterness-parliament)  
on the sand cyot of that name in the Bull water.

Base for ascent of *Hekla* (the Hood), which will occupy  
a day. Ride to *Galtalækur* (Hog brook) and engage  
farmer as guide.

Make an excursion hence to *Hlíðarendi* (Lithe-end) and  
see the ruins of Gunnar's home. Late in the summer  
when the *Markarfljót* (Marches-flood) is low it is possible  
to ford it and see the *Þórsmörk* (Thor's marches), one of  
the finest woods in Iceland, and full of romantic interest.  
This will occupy a day at least, and a tent will be needed.  
If you succeed in this, pass along the south side of the  
Marches-flood to *Stóridalur* (Stour dale); if not, return  
to Lithe-end, ford the *Þverá* (Thwart water) and Marches-  
flood from there and make Stourdale your destination, as  
in the other case.



*Stóridalur* (Stourdale).  
Accom. good.

An easy day, fair road,  
fording the Marches flood  
and *Alar* (the Reins) to  
*Kross* (Cross).

Accom. good.

An easy day, fair road,  
fording the *Affall* and  
fording or ferrying the  
Thwart-water, to

*Oddi* (the Triangle).

Accom. good.

One day, swampy road,  
and bad ford and ferry  
over the *hjórsd* (Bull  
water), to

*Eyrbakkí* (Beach-  
bank).

Accom. exc.

One day, fair road.  
ferrying the *Ölfusd* (Ölfus-  
water), to

*Krisuvík* (Cross-wick).

Accom. bad.

One day, over execra-  
bly bad lava-beds, back  
to *Reykjavík*.

From Stourdale visit the foss at *Seljadalur* (Shieling dale).

All the scenery hereabouts is interesting. From Cross a good view of the *Vestmannaeyjar* (Westmen's islands). This is the starting-point of Route III.

After crossing the *Affall* examine the site of *Bergþórs-kvöll* (Bergthora's knoll) where

Njáll was burnt, also the hollow where the murderers hid their horses, and the little peat moss called *Kára-tjörn* (Kári's tarn) where the fugitive quenched his burning garments. The accommodation in the existing hovels is poor, and they must not be depended on for a stay.

Nothing to be seen here, but it is an excellent store, and a few things should be laid in for use on the two following days. Good trout-fishing in the *Sog* (Inlet) that drains the Thingfields-water.

Several hours may be spent in looking at the live sulphur-pits, boiling mud-wells, and hissing hot-springs. Reindeer may be found in the wilds adjacent.

Books relating to this tour are: "The Story of Burnt Njal," by Dr. Dasent, and "Six Weeks in the Saddle," by S. E. Waller.

Route II. *Reykjavík* to the *Hvalfjörður*, *Borgarfjörður*, *Stapi*, *Snæfellsjökull*, *Stykkishólmur*, and through the North-west Peninsula. About six weeks.

From *Reykjavík* by boat (sending round the empty horses), to *Kjalar-nes* (Keel ness), thence ride round the firth, one day, fair road, to

*Reynivellir* (Rowan-fields).

Accom. exc.

An easy day, fair road (or boat) to

*Ingunnarstaðir* (Ingunnarstead).

Ascend the *Súlur* (Peaks) from here and return to the farm for the night.

Accom. poor. No church.

Three hours, good road (or boat), to

*Botn* (Bottom).

Accom. poor. No church.

One day, fair road (or boat), to

*Saurber* (Swampy farm).

Accom. good, but greedy host.

One day, fair road over the *Skarðsheiði* (Pass-heath), to

*Grund* (Green-field).

Accom. good.

An easy day, good road, to

*Reykholt* (Reek holt).

Accom. exc.

Six hours, swampy road, ferry *Hvítá* (White water) to

*Staffholt* (Staffholt).

Accom. exc.

One day, swampy road, ford or ferry North water ford *Gljúfrá* (Chasm-water), *Langá* (Long water), and *Álfá* (Swan water), to

*Staðarhraun* (Stead-lava).

Accom. good.

Nine hours, lava and swamp, fording *Hítá* (Hot-water) *Kaldá* (Cold water), and *Haffjarðará* (Sea-firth-water), to

*Miklaholt* (Mickle-holt).

Accom. exc.

One day, bad swamps, to

*Búðir* (Booths).

Accom. exc.

One day, to

Get a guide here and follow out the directions in the journal for seeing the *Glymur* (Clashing) fall, and then ride or row down the firth to

Here is nothing to be seen or done—*Saurbar í Hvalfjarðarströnd* (in Whalefirth-strand).

Some time may be spent here in shooting wild fowl and fishing for trout in the *Skorradalsvatn* (Pie-dale's water).

See Snorri's bath, and the tumulus which awaits investigation. The valley is full of hot springs, some even in the river itself.

There is an abundance of salmon in the White water, the *Þverá* (Thwart water) and the *Norðrá* (North water).

Bird-life is plentiful in this district and the gun should ever be in readiness. On the next day's journey comes the *Eldborg* (Fire-burg) an extraordinary crater resembling a castle, lying three hours from Stead-lava.

Shooting, and salmon fishing in the neighbouring *Laxá* (Lax-water).

Ride hence to *Stapi* (Steeple) the diminutive local Fingal's Cave or Giant's Causeway, to which a day may be devoted. There are two ways to the next halting-place,

either across the promontory or around it. In choosing the former return to *Búðir* from *Stapi*, in the latter case, sleep at *Stapi* and start early. The second is much the more picturesque, but the road has a dash of danger in it where it passes under *Enni* (the Brow).

Base for the ascent of *Snæfellsjökull* (Snowfell-glacier).

*Ólafsvík* (Olave's-wick).

Accom. exc.

Six hours, by the mountain pass on the face of the *Búlandshöfði* (Home-landhead), to

*Grundarfjörður* (Green-field-firth).

Accom. exc.

An easy day, good road, to

*Stykkishólmur* (Stick-holm).

Accom. exc.

An easy day, good road, to

*Snóksdalur* (The Snake's dale).

Accom. good.

Easy day, good road, fording *Miðá* (Mid-water), *Haukadalsá* (Hawkdale-water), *Laxá* (Lax-water), and *Glerá* (Glass-water), to

*Hvammur* (Coombe).

Accom. good.

One day, mountainous road, to

*Hvöll* (Knoll).

Accom. good.

The way hither is highly picturesque and wild. After leaving here the road cuts a small promontory, at the end of which lies *Hallbjörnareyri* (Hallbjörn's beach), where a couple of Runic tombstones may be seen. Next comes the *Berserkja-hraun* (Bearsarks' lava). The superstitious account of the making of the road over this lava field is found in the *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Two tumuli by the way-side are said to mark the graves of the Bear-sarks. Near are the *Holgafell* (Holy-fell) and the tumulus of Arnkell.

At a spot known as the *Þingvellir* (Parliament fields) or *Þórsnes* (Thor's-ness), are the traces of an old heathen Doom-ring, and a *Blótsteinn* or Sacrificial stone is still visible.

From this spot three courses are open to the tourist.

1. He may carry out the programme of going through the N.W. Peninsula. 2. One day's journey will take him across to *Staðir* (Stead) on the north coast. 3. One hard day's ride will take him back to *Stafholt*, whence he may reach *Reykjavík* in three to four days—making a round tour of about three weeks.

All this country is full of interest for the Saga reader, especially in connexion with the Laxdæla Saga. The way passes *Hjarðarholt* (Herd-holt), once the residence of Olave the Peacock. The marks of its site are still quite clear, and lie just in front of the present parsonage. At Coombe are the traces of the heathen seat of judicature, and near it those of a castle. The ring on the church door is said to have belonged to the old heathen temple. On the hills *Krosshólar* (Cross hills) near by, Christian worship was established, principally by Auða the Rich, and on the sea-sand is shown a stone, which is said to mark her burial place.

Site of old heathen temple visible. After leaving here, at the end of the bay *Kleifar* (Cliffs) is a picturesque fall,

One day, fair road, especially at ebb tide, to the *Gullfoss* (Gold-force). In the *Gillsfjörðr* (Gill-firth), passed by the way, huge petrified trees have been disinterred.

*Berufjörðr* (Bear-firth). Boating excursions to the islands in the *Breiðfjörðr* (Broad-firth) would be very interesting to naturalists and sportsmen.

Accom. good.  
A long and hard day's ride over the *Þorskafla-árheiði* (Cod-firth-heath), to

*Kirkjuból* (Church-built) in the *Ísafjörðr* (Ice-firth). If it be intended to ascend either the *Glámujökull* (Noisy-glacier) or the *Drangajökull* (Lonely-peak-glacier) all heavy baggage must be left here. It is perhaps better to take *Dranga* first, in which case proceed by

Accom. good.  
Four hours, good road, horse to *Hamar*.

to

*Hamar* (Crag). You will return hither and depart in a boat, upon which the horses should be sent back to *Kirkjuból* to await your arrival.

Accom. good. No church.  
Two hours, good road, bad ford, to

*Ármúli* (River-Mull), Take guide here for the glacier. By riding or walking from *Ármúli* to the head of the *Kaldalón* (Cold inlet) the glacier may be seen falling into the sea.

and thence 10½ hours to top of *Dranga* and back, with an additional two hours to *Hamar*. Hence nine hours by boat to *Ísafjörðr* (Ice-firth) town-ship [also known as *Eyri*, in *Skutilsfjörðr* (The Page's firth)].

Accom. exc. On the way from *Hamar* to *Ísafjörðr*, calls should be made at *Vigr* (The Spear) and *Æðey* (Eider-eyot) to see the eider-ducks and other water-fowl.

Six hours, by boat, to *Ót* (Oyce) and return to *Ísafjörðr*. Large beds of *Surtarbrandr* (Surt's brand) or Lignite here visible.

Hence to the attack of the *Glámujökull* and back to *Kirkjuból*. Hence For attacking *Glámujökull* it is most probable that a return by boat would have to be made as far as the head of the *Skötufjörðr* (Skate-firth), where a couple of small farms will be found that may provide guides, but not much else.

One day, mountain road but good, to

*Staðr* (Stead) on the *Steingrímsfjörðr* (Steingrím's-firth).

Accom. good.

One day, good road, to

*Kirkjuból* (Church-built) in the *Gólmaströnd* (Roaring-beach).

Accom. good. No church.

One day, road fair, to

*Óspakseyri*.

Accom. good.

One day, good road, to

*Prestbakki* (Priest-bank).

Accom. good.

One day, good road, to

*Staðr* (Stead) on the *Hrútafjörðr* (Rut-firth). From this point Route VI. may be followed, either eastwards to *Akureyri*, or southwards to *Reykjavík*. The former is six hard days distant, the latter five days.

Books relating to this tour are: "Iceland," by Comr. C. S. Forbes; "The North-west Peninsula of Iceland," by C. W. Shepherd; "The Oxonian in Iceland," by the Rev. F. Metcalfe.

Route III. From *Kross* by land along the southern coast of Iceland to *Djúpivogur*. About a fortnight.

From *Kross* (see Route I.)

One day, fair road, to *Holt* (Holt). Grottoes hollowed out by the sea when the land was submerged, especially *Hrútskellir* (Hrutr's hallier, as they would say in Shetland). *Skógafoss* (Shaw-force) and fine

Accom. good.

One day, good road, glacier scenery.

to

*Skógar* (Shaws).

Accom. good.

One day, good road, fording the Foulbrook, periodically causes a *Jökulhlaup* (Glacier leap) or flood from the glacier. Very interesting to a geologist.

*Vík* (Wick).

Accom. good, no church. The way passes the *Dyrhólar* (Door-hill-eyot) a perforated buttress through which a ship might sail. At the *Dyrhólar* settlement the local "Thing" is held in a

One day, fair road, but constantly fording grotto known as the *Loftsálahellir* (Air-hall-cave).

bad rivers, to

*Mýrar* (Moors).

Accom. fair; church near, but on wrong side of a bad river. All along here very interesting to see the effects of eruptions and floods.

One day, fair road, fording *Kúðafjót*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Captain Burton derives this name from "Kúði, the little Norwegian boats which ascended it in the olden day," and probably he is right.

(? Cod-fry-flood), *Skaptá* (Shaft-water), and *Geirlandstá* (Goar-land-water), all bad rivers, to

*Hörghsdalur* (Howe-dale).

Accom. good, no church.

One day, fair road, but many rivers, to

*Núpsstaðir* (Peak-stead),

Accom. fair, no church.

One day, fording two very bad rivers, to

*Svínafell* (Swine-fell).

Accom. fair, no church.

Very easy day, good road, to

*Hof* (Heathen Temple).

Accom. fair.

Very long day, and bad road, to

*Kálfiðfellstaðir* (Calf-fell-stead).

Accom. fair.

One day, good road, ford the *Kolgríma* and the *Hornafjarðarfjót* (Horn-firth-flood), the latter  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles broad, to

*Bjarnanes* (Björn's-ness).

Accom. good.

One day, good road, to *Stafafell* (Staff-fell).

Accom. fair.

One day, fair road, to *Hof* (Heathen Temple) in the *Álptafjörður* (Swan-firth).

One day, fair road, to

*Dýpivögr* (Deep-voe).

Accom. exc.

Notice the *Eldvatn* (Fire-water), issuing from beneath a lava bed. All this country has been the scene of fearful devastations from eruptions of lava and floods of water from the thawing snows and ice.

This was Mr. Watts's headquarters for his journey across the *Vatnajökull* (Lake-glacier). Near by towers the *Lómagnútur* (Loon-peak), a perpendicular wall 2400 ft. high. At the back of the farm is one of the finest woods in the island, nestling among glaciers.

The *Skeiðardrjökull* (Swift-water-glacier), overlooks the road which traverses a vast sandy plain, the result of inundations from the glacier. At Swinefell get a guide and ascend part of the glacier.

The way lies over the *Breiðamerkersandur* (Broad-mark-sand), and is not always passable.

Abundant and striking glacier scenery.

This is one of the least visited parts of Iceland, and contains the most remarkable scenery, but the farmers are everywhere poor and the rivers unusually bad.

At the foot of the *Bíllandstindur* (Home-land-peak), a great variety of zeolites may be gathered.

Route IV. *Djálpiþvogr* to the *Lágarfjót*, *Möðrudalur*, *Mývatn*, and *Akureyri*. About 8 to 10 days.

From *Djálpiþvogr* take a boat up the firth, letting the ponies walk round empty to the farm of

*Beruffjörðr* (Bear-firth).

Accom. fair.

One day, mountain road, ford *Múlad* (Mull-water), to

*Þingmúli* (Thing-mull).

Accom. exc.

One day, good road, ford or ferry *Lágarfjót* (? Log-flood), to

*Valþjófstaðr* (Valthjof's-stead).

Accom. exc.

One day, fair road, to

*Brú* (Bridge).

Accom. good.

One day, bad road, to

*Möðrudalur* (Maddersdale).

The finest farm in Iceland.

One long day, bad road, ferry *Fökulsá á Fjöllum* (Glacier water o' the Fells), to

*Reykjahlíð* (Reeky-ledge).

One day, good road, ford *Krúkad* (Crow-water), and *Skjálfandafljót* (Shivering-flood), to

Sleep at *Beruffjörðr*, as the distance from *Djálpiþvogr* to *Þingmúli* is too great for one day.

Fishing, shooting, and pretty scenery on and about the Log-flood. Do not forget the *Hengifoss* (Hanging-force), said to be 1200 ft. high.

At *Skrifuklaustur* (Landslip-cloister), half-an-hour distant are two barrows marking the site of the last priory founded in Iceland.

On this stage the *Fökulsá á brú* (Glacier water o' the bridge) is crossed in a little box running on two ropes high above the torrent. The horses swim in another place. The farm has suffered much from a recent eruption of pumice.

Some of the finest remaining silver-worked dresses belong to the ladies of this very superior household.

The way passes a curious sand crater called the *Hrossaborg* (Horse-burg), and winds round the lava that was ejected a year or two ago. Reindeer are sometimes met with in this district. *Reykjahlíð* will be a base for several little tours. The first object will be fishing and shooting on the Midge-water—*Mývatn*. The sulphur-pits, boiling mud-wells, &c., will also be interesting. Ride to *Skúttustaðir* (Skuti's-stead) on the southern shore. Here you may organize an expedition to the *Öskjukjá* (Casket-rift), a new volcano, occupying 4 or 5 days. Guides will probably have to be got at *Svartdrekot* (Swart-water-cot), a little farm destitute of accommodation, about a day distant.

- Ljósavatn* (Light-water). Near the ford on the Shivering-flood is the *Goðafoss* (Gods' force), one of the finest in Iceland.
- Accom. good. In the valley of the Touchwood-water is a pretty little birch copse.
- An easy day, good road, ford or ferry *Enjók-d* (Touchwood-water) and ford the mouths of the *Eyafjarðará* (Isle-firth-water) or take a boat across the firth, to *Akureyri* (Acre-beach). Accom. excel.

Route V. *Akureyri* to the *Laxá*, *Hilsavík*, *Ásberg*, *Dettifoss*, *Mjvatn*, *Möðrudalur*, and *Seyðisfjörður*. About ten days.

From *Akureyri* good road, crossing *Eyafjarðará* fording or ferrying *Skjálfsandafjót*, one full day, to

*Milli* (Mull) or *Grenjaðarstaðir* (Greed-edge-stand).

Accom. exc.

Three hours, good road, ford or bridge over *Laxá* and ford *Mýrakevisl* (Moor-fork), to

*Hilsavík* (Housewick).

Accom. exc.

One long day, good road, ferry *Jökulsá á Fjöllum*, to

*Skinnastaðir* (Skin-stand).

Accom. good.

Three hours, fair road, ferry *Jökulsá*, to

*Ás* (the god).

The *Laxá* (Laxwater) is full of salmon and trout from the falls just above these farms down to its mouth, a distance of at least twenty miles.<sup>2</sup>

Close to the salmon-fishing at mouth of *Laxá*.

From Skinstead a tour should be made to visit a Grettir's-lair in *Axargnipr* (Axe-peak), occupying a day.

Thence recross the river and ride to *Ás* (the god) and

<sup>2</sup> A Mr. W. G. Lock, who contributes some "Notes on Iceland" to a very recent (May, 1879) number of the *Field*, says:—"When I arrived on the *Laxá*, I found all the best waters rented for five years by two English gentlemen . . . . What is meant by the "best waters" I do not know, nor whether it implies the whole twenty miles of fishing, and time does not admit of my prosecuting inquiry.



Accom. poor. No church. through the *Asberg* cliffs, perhaps camping in the wood that fills the hollow.

Two hours, good road, to

*Svinadalr* (Swine dale). The last farm that will be seen till *Reykjahlíð* is

Accom. fair. No church.

One-and-a-half hours, fair road, to

*Dettifoss* (Tumbling-force). Some time may be spent in sketching the fall—the finest in Iceland—and in observing the scenery in the

gorges. Swinefell should be the night's lodging, and an early start should be made.

Accom. none. No grass. Four hours, bad way, no distinct path and no farms, to

*Reykjahlíð*.

Seven hours, to

*Grimstaðir* (Grimur's-stand). Here the road branches off to *Vopnaffjörðr* (Weapon-firth,)—Long day, mountain road to *Hof* (Heathen Temple).

Accom. exc. No church. Thence two hours to the Cheapstead.

Three hours, to

*Möðrudalr*.

One day, good road, to

*Hofteigr* (Temple-close). *Roches moutonnées* and other glacial remains on the uplands.

Accom. exc.

One day, fair road, fording some small streams, and over *Jökulsá* by bridge, to

*Seýðisfjörðr* (Seethe-firth). From Seethe-firth it is only a day's ride to the Iceland spar diggings at *Eskifjörðr* (Ash-firth).

Accom. exc.

Books for this and preceding tour: "Iceland," by the Rev. Baring Gould, and "Across the *Vatnajökull*," by W. L. Watts. Also this volume.

Route VI. *Reykjavík* to *Akureyri* over the *Holtavörðuhéiði*. About eleven days.

From *Reykjavík*.

Pass *Mosfell* (Moss-fell) where lived Egill the hero of

the Egils Saga. They say Anglo-Saxon coins, part of the buried treasure from Athelstane of England, have been found in the neighbouring gill.

*Sauðbær í Hvalfjarðarströnd*.

See Route II.

One day, fair road, ferry

*Hvítá* (White water), to

- Stafholt.*  
One day, fair road,  
ford *Norðrá* (North-  
water), to  
*Hvammr* (Combe) in  
the *Norðrárdalur* (North-  
water-dale).  
Accom. exc.  
One full day, mountain  
road, fording *Hrútafjarð-  
ará* (Rutfirth-water), to  
*Staðr.*  
An easy day, good  
road, to  
*Melstaðr* (Meal-stead).  
Accom. exc.  
One day, good road,  
ford *Miðfjarðará* (Mid-  
firth-water) and small  
streams, to  
*Borg* (Burg).  
Accom. exc.  
One day, good road,  
ford *Víðisdalsá* (Withy-  
dale water), *Gljúfrá* (Cliffs  
water), *Vatnsdalsá*  
(Water-dale-water), *Gljá*  
(Gill-water) and ferry  
*Blanda*, to  
*Holtastaðir* (Holt-  
stead).  
Accom. exc.  
One day, bad road, to  
*Víðimýri* (Withy-  
moor).  
Accom. good.  
An easy day, ford  
*Svartá* (Swart-water) and  
ferry the *Héraðsvötn*  
(District-waters), to  
*Silfrastaðir* (Silver-  
stead).  
Accom. good.  
One long day, moun-  
tain road, ford many small  
rivers, to  
*Bægisá* (Obstructive-  
water).
- See Route II.
- Base for an ascent of the curious trachytic cone *Baula*  
(the Cow). Last decent farm on S. side of *Holtavörðu-  
heiði* (Holtbeacon-heath).  
Notice the *Hæðarsteinn* (Height-stone) in the centre of  
the heath, prob. sacrificial.
- See Route II. Good salmon-fishing.
- Good salmon-fishing near *Bjarg* (Boulder), the home  
of *Grettir*, the hero of the *Grettis Saga*. Excavations  
might be well repaid.
- Plenty of fishing and shooting. See the crater near,  
once the refuge of outlaws. An excursion may be made  
to *Undirfell* (Under-fell), the centre of interest in the  
*Vatnsdals Saga*. Site of old heathen temple still visible.
- Shooting and fishing.
- Shooting and fishing. Two days' easy ride to *Reykir*  
(Reeks), no accom., for mineralogizing at foot of *Tinda-  
stoll* (Peak-stool) and for boat excursion to *Drangey*  
(Lonely-peak-isle) the scene of *Grettir's* outlawry and  
murder.
- Get a good rest here.
- With good and fresh horses it is quite possible to con-  
clude the stage to *Akureyri*, being about fifteen hours in

Accom. excel. the saddle, but the baggage horses must follow more  
Four hours, good road, slowly.

to

*Akureyri*.

See Route IV.

Book relating to this tour : "Iceland," by Baring Gould. Also this volume.

Route VII. *Reykjavík* to *Akureyri* across the *Stórisandr*. About six or seven days.

*Reykjavík*.

One day, to

*Þingvellir*.

See Route I.

Twelve hours, bad road,  
ford,

*Hvítá* (White-water),

to

*Kalmanstunga* (Kal-  
man's tongue or delta).

Accom. poor, no  
church.

Seventeen hours, fair  
road, ford *Norðlingafjót*  
(Northerners' flood) *Blan-*  
*da* and *Svartá* (Swart-  
water), to

*Malifell* (Measure-hill).

Accom. fair.

Six hours, fair road,  
ford

*Héraðsvötn*, to

*Silfrastaðir*.

See Route VI.

Thence to

*Reykjavík*.

See Route VI.

Book relating to this tour : "Iceland" by Baring Gould. Also this volume.

Route VIII. *Reykjavík* to *Akureyri* by the *Vatnahjallavegr*. About six or seven days.

*Reykjavík*.

One day to *Þingvellir*.

See Route I.

Thence one day, to

*Haukadalr*.

See Route I.

One day, bad road,  
ford several streams, to

First camping-ground.

One day, bad road, but  
grass and scrub by the

way ; ferry

A camping-ground with poor pasture will be found near the left bank of the *Hvítá* (White-water). It will be necessary to have a tent. Fuel grows *in situ*. Must have materials for caulking the ferry-boat, and a guide, not easily found, will also be necessary.

*Hvötdi*, to  
Second camping-ground.

Probably one day's  
hard riding, fording  
several streams to the  
first farms on the

*Eyafjallavíð* (Isle-firth-  
water).

Thence to  
*Akureyri* two days may  
be used, as farms lie  
thickly.

The second camping-ground lies near the *Hveravellir* (Hot-spring-fields). Notice the glacier descending into the lake just above the ferry, and take advantage of the grass found by the way. Numbers of swans here, may be chased on horseback, when they are moulting. Pass a bone heap, the remains of a party overtaken on the heath and starved to death. Scanty pasture at the camp, but widely distributed and horses likely to stray.

This route is very rarely passed, but I am assured that it is much superior to the *Sprengisandur* as regards forage for the ponies. Almost everything will depend on the guide.

The only tourist who has passed a part of this road is the Rev. F. Metcalfe, "Oxonian in Iceland." Some notes will also be found in this volume.

Route IX. *Reykjavík* to *Akureyri* over the *Sprengisandur*. About six or seven days.

*Reykjavík*.  
Seven hours, good road  
to

*Reykir* (Reeks).  
Accom. poor.

Twelve hours, bad road,  
ferry *Hvötdi* (White water),  
to

*Hagi* (Pasture).  
Accom. fair. No  
church.

Eight hours, bad road,  
ford many streams, to  
camp at *Miklalekkr*  
(Mickle-brook).

Twelve hours, bad road,  
fording many bad streams,  
to

Camp under *Arnarfell*  
(Erne-fell).

Twelve hours, bad  
road, to

Camp at *Kiðagil* (Kid-  
gill).

Five hours, bad road,  
to

*Íshóll* (Ice-hill).  
Accom. fair. No  
church.

Three hours, good road,  
to

Hotsprings here.

The last good farm south of the deserts.

Pasture for the horses. Interesting scenery on all sides.

Good pasture for the horses. Glaciers tower above the camping-ground. Many wild swans. Gorgeous scenery. After leaving here plenty of water, but no grass at all till *Kiðagil*.

Let the ponies have a bite here, then push on to *Íshóll*.

The first farm to the north of the deserts.

*Stóruvellir* (Stour- There is splendid pasturage here. By fording the fields). *Skjálfandafljót*, one day's ride will bring the tourist to

Accom. exc. No *Húsavík* (see Route V.) or *Mývatn* (see Route IV.). church.

One day, fair road,  
ford

*Frjóskað*, to  
*Akureyri*.

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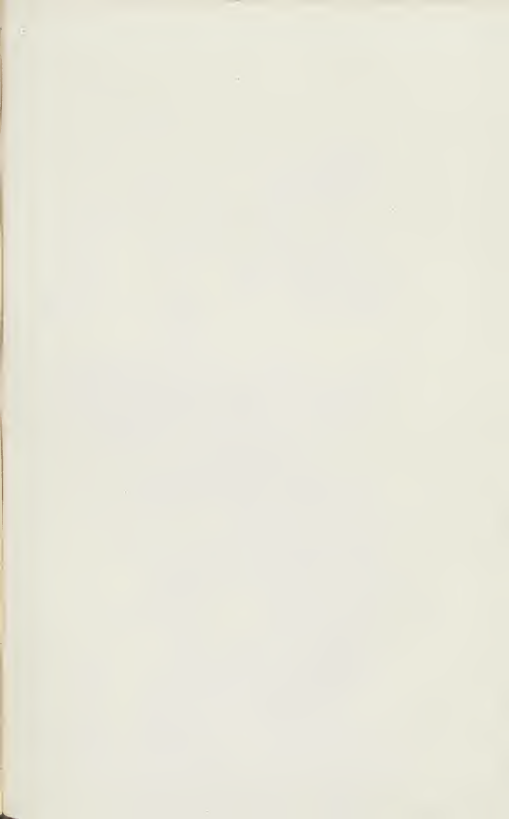
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